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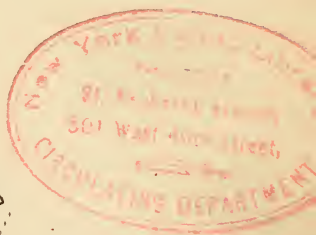
AND

THREE BRAVE BOYS

BY

MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN.

*Author of "Jasper Thorne," "Chatelaine of the Roses,"
"Jack Chumleigh," etc., etc.*

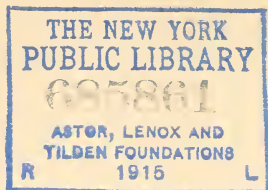


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*To my Godchild,
M. F. D.*

ROY VON
21804
VHASEL

✕ 5036

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IN A BRAZILIAN FOREST.

I.

ON THE GREEN ISLE.

THE sunlight fell on the breeze-rippled bosom of the river which, dimpling and smiling, fled swiftly between its banks. The soft winds, laden with flower-scents from the neighboring hedges gently shook the hazel branches that bordered the breen, or lane, in which Tom Desmond stood. The landscape stretching around him was full of blithe life and cheerful beauty; but his sad, thoughtful face did not reflect the spirit of the scene.

Tom Desmond was a boy of fifteen, tall for his age, with a strong, well knit frame, a shock of curly red hair, frank blue eyes and an honest, though somewhat freckled face. His clothes were neat, but the patches in various places showed that if poverty was in his home, there were also careful and loving hands.

With an unusually melancholy expression on his face, Tom leaned idly on his spade and looked sadly toward the road leading along the river's bank. He had great cause for sadness. In that small hut farther up the lane dwelt his father, mother, sister and brothers, and they were very poor—almost in want of bread—and yet Tom could not help them. The harvest was a failure; there was no work for him; times were hard.

His father had been a "well-to-do" farmer, but, he had lately been reduced to poverty by no fault of his own. He was lying sick in that hut in the lane.

In vain Tom had gone for miles around entreating employment from the farmers. He had obtained work for a few days, but it had soon come to an end. How he longed from the bottom of his heart for means to help those dear ones now depending on him! How often had he prayed that Heaven would send him aid! As yet his prayer had not found an answer but still he hoped and prayed.

"All seems dark," he murmured, sighing and looking at the sparkling stream that at present was such a contrast to his life. "All seems dark,

but God knows best. He will send light when it pleases Him. And I *must* find a way!"

Tom's thoughts were suddenly turned in another direction. A loud shriek sounded from the road. It was followed by the noise of running horses and the loud tones of a man's voice.

In an instant Tom leaped to the end of the lane.

The road to which the lane led ran for several miles along the extreme edge of the river bank. On the other side of the road, not fifty yards from where Tom stood, the bank, not gradually sloping as at other places, was steep and precipitous. At this place the road took a sharp turn.

Standing at the end of the lane, Tom saw all this at a glance, as well as the perilous situation of two human beings, who, dragged behind a pair of frightened horses, were nearing at a frightfully rapid rate of speed this dangerous part of the road.

The horses, mad with terror, came swiftly along. The carriage swayed from side to side, and at times bounding high in the air. The vehicle contained a man and a young woman. The woman had sunk back, fainting. The

gentleman stood erect, endeavoring to regain control over the terrified animals.

The dust rose in clouds, but Tom could see the pale face of the man and even the foam-flakes whirling from the galled mouths of the horses. The danger was terribly real, and it increased every instant. Nearer and nearer they came to the sudden turn of the road.

In another moment steeds, carriage and occupants would plunge into the stream, and be met by the piercing points of rock below. This Tom knew well, and, murmuring a prayer, he resolutely grasped his spade. He ran forward some yards and sprang into the road, in the path of the approaching horses.

He could almost feel their hot breath on his face. He gasped the bridle of one of them and as he was dragged along dealt a succession of heavy blows with his spade upon the head of the near horse. The animal reared and backed heavily on his companion. Encumbered by this heavy weight, the off horse slackened his pace, and Tom, assisted by the man whom he had rescued from certain death, soon brought him to a standstill.

His brave act was over, Tom stood pale and trembling, while the gentleman thanked him fervently in broken English. He was not hurt; it was only the effect of the intense excitement and exertion that for a moment deprived the boy of all his accustomed energy.

The nearest house was the Desmond cottage, and thence Tom helped the gentleman to convey the fainting lady. Tom blushed at the thought of a stranger's beholding the poverty of the family; but humanity quickly subdued his false pride, and he cheerfully led the way.

In the kind and gentle hands of Mrs. Desmond the young lady soon recovered from her swoon, and the gentleman told his name.

He was Senhor José Raimundo and the young lady was his daughter Isabella. He was a Portuguese by birth, but he had emigrated to Brazil, where he succeeded in amassing great wealth. He became the possessor of coffee and sugar plantations and vast herds of wild cattle. Growing old, he also grew tired of Brazilian life, and longed to visit his own country. Leaving his plantations in care of his two sons, he traveled with his daughter through Europe. In the

course of his journey he had come to Ireland, and taken that drive which, had it not been, humanly speaking, for Tom's interference, would have ended in death.

Senhor Raimundo wished to reward Tom with a sum of money, that to the boy seemed an immense fortune; but Tom's father would not permit him to accept it. His son had done nothing but his duty, Mr. Desmond said.

Senhor Raimundo was too well bred to press his offer of money. Both he and his daughter again expressed their gratitude and left the cottage.

It was plain that the Desmonds were very poor and also very well bred, and Senhorita Isabella formed a hundred plans for their relief; but on close examination all proved impracticable.

"I have another idea," she at last exclaimed.

"Idea number one hundred and one," said her father, gravely.

"Well you must admit that each of my plans was better than the preceding one, and this one is the best of all."

"Will you consent to put it into words, little princess?"

Although Isabella was almost twenty, she was remarkably small, and her father's pet name for her was "little princess"—probably because she ruled him.

"We will take them to Brazil, papa."

"There was something in that," said Senhor Raimundo, musingly; "I will think of it."

He not only thought of it, but acted on it. He went to see Father Ryan and discovered from the priest that the Desmonds were among the most exemplary of his parishioners.

He visited the Desmond cottage and proposed Isabella's plan. He promised the father and boys plenty of work in Brazil, and a corresponding amount of compensation. In a short time, he said, they might come to own land in the New World—an event which would hardly come to pass in the Old. They would not be long in learning the strange customs of a new country, and he would comfortably establish them at first. He would give the necessary letters of instructions, lend the requisite amount of money, which could be repaid in time.

After much hesitation—for it was hard to think of parting from the old land—Bernard

Desmond accepted the Portuguese's generous offer; but at present he was too ill to undertake a voyage. Some time must elapse before he could start.

Amplly providing in many delicate ways for the needs of the sick man and his family, Senhor Raimundo and his daughter started for home, followed by the blessings of those to whom they had opened a hopeful future.

The Desmond children were three—Mary, Tom and Gerald. Mary was sixteen, Tom a year younger, and Gerald just thirteen.

Time passed. Bernard Desmond daily grew stronger. The day of departure was at last fixed, and the preparations for the voyage were nearly completed.

"And what are we going to do with the pigs?" broke forth Gerald, stopping suddenly in the congenial occupation of dancing vigorously on a box in order to close the lid. "I don't think we have a chest big enough for the five of them. I think Tom and myself might make a nice new pen, though."

They all laughed in spite of their sadness.

"Wouldn't you like to take anything else?"

asked Tom. "A dozen houses, or the chapel itself? It would be pleasant to have a few little things to remind us of home."

"I say, Mary," demanded Gerald, "how are we going to carry the pigs? Tom's always making fun of me."

"Mr. Bryan's steward has offered to buy them," said Mary's soft voice.

"Buy the pigs! sell the pigs! You're out of your mind, Mary."

Mary only smiled, and Tom said that he thought insanity had broken out in the youngest member of the family.

"You're not going to sell Brian Boru," cried Gerald, dancing on the refractory box-lid. "I'll empty every rag out of my box and put him in it before I'll leave him!"

The porker honored with the name of Gerald's favorite hero, was a great pet of the boys. It was a white little pig, as pretty as any pig can be, and it generally followed its master everywhere, when it had nothing more important to do—that is, when it could find nothing to eat. Gerald probably occupied the place next to buttermilk in its affection—which is a great deal to

say of a pig—and shows that Brian Boru was of a very loving disposition. Tom, who knew a little Latin, and who imagined he knew much more, said in allusion to the tender affection, “*Similia similibus curantur*,” which he translated, “Like follows like,” greatly to Gerald’s annoyance.

Gerald appealed to his father in behalf of the porcine Brian; but the case was decided against him, and on the day of departure Gerald’s farewell to his favorite was quite affecting. Brian, however, bore the parting with commendable resignation and managed to restrain his grief within the bounds of two or three grunts.

Hearing that the Desmonds were about to leave the country, their neighbors sent many gifts—usually of small value, but rich in kind motives. Father Ryan gave Mary a beautiful prayer-book, to Tom one of Gerald Griffin’s books, and to the master of the loved Brian Boru a clasp-knife. For the priest knew that he would value that more than any book. To all the family he gave what they prized most—his blessing.

And so one bright morning the Desmonds said

adieu to Ireland. They set sail from Liverpool. Nothing unusual occurred on the voyage. Gerald became a favorite with the sailors in spite of his propensity for getting into scrapes. In fact, he seemed to be made of India rubber, for after a fall that would have broken another boy's neck he would coolly pick himself up and appear the least concerned person present.

The voyage was at last over, and the Desmonds stepped upon the shore of the New World; but all the gorgeous tropical beauty around them could not make them forget the old land across the ocean.

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II.

CAPTAIN NEHEMIAH SLAMMER.

THE Neptune, on which vessel the Desmonds had embarked at Liverpool, was somewhat more than a month reaching Para.

Para, as you will see by a glance at your map of South America, is a Brazilian city, standing on the east bank of the splendid and majestic river Para. The land around the city is overspread by a vast forest, and the vegetation is so rapid and luxuriant in its growth that the constant exercise of care is necessary to prevent it from encroaching upon the streets of the city. The forests of the Amazon blaze with color,—it is this fiery color that gave the name “braza,” (flaming embers,) to Brazil.

Tom Desmond, who firmly believed that the Suir had no equal in the world, was struck with astonishment as the Neptune glided up the broad, brownish colored river. He might well be amazed. At its mouth the Para measures thirty-nine miles in breadth, and at the city, nearly

seventy miles from the sea, it is twenty miles wide. By some geographers the Para is said to be a mouth of the Amazon; but several facts have been mentioned which tend to prove that the Para, strictly speaking, is not a mouth of the King of Rivers.

The Desmonds, particularly the younger ones, were very glad to tread once more on dry land after their long sojourn amid the shifting billows of the ocean.

Everything around them was new—the language, the people, the trees, the appearance of the houses—and yet this very novelty helped to lighten the dreary feeling of loneliness which at first oppressed them.

It was with thankful hearts that the Desmonds entered a church after their landing.

“Every place is home where He is,” Mrs. Desmond murmured with a sigh of relief.

And the strange things in this strange land already began to look brighter in the eyes of this little band of newcomers.

The captain of the Neptune had received written orders from Senhor Raimundo relative to the Desmonds. The captain conducted them to a

pleasant house on the outskirts of the city. The house belonged to Senhor Raimundo. It was unoccupied, save by two negroes, who took care of it. Here the Desmonds were to remain until the Senhor's steward should arrive to take them to a plantation near Olydos.

The house was low and square, surrounded by a garden, and containing eight large rooms. Like the generality of Brazilian houses it had a veranda running around the outside. The exterior walls were whitewashed; and looking at it from the road, with its red-tiled roof peering from the bower of large-leaved trees, one could not think of a prettier house in which to live.

The two negroes were named Joaquim and Luco. Joaquim was old, shriveled and bent, with hair as white as snow. Luco was young. The whites of his eyes and his pearly teeth were in striking contrast to the intense blackness of his wool and skin. He liked mischief and hated work. In him Gerald found a congenial spirit, although neither could understand the spoken language of the other.

One evening, several days after their arrival at Para, the members of the family were seated in

the largest of the rooms, the windows of which looked into the garden. Mary and her mother were knitting. Tom was reciting with superfluous energy an extract from his book of poems. Mr. Desmond, with his chin resting on his stout cane, seemed lost in thought, while Gerald played with a pet that had been presented to him by his friend Luco. The air was full of delightful scents, and without the moonlight, falling through the tracery of the palms, made a scene of enchantment.

Gerald's new pet was a small marmoset monkey. The sound of distant music was heard approaching. Gerald attempted to drop the monkey from his shoulder, where it had perched, but it took refuge on his head and clung to his hair. He was forced to run out into the veranda with his living head-covering.

The music drew nearer. It was a chorus sung by many voices. Tom ceased his recitation. Even Mr. Desmond lost his preoccupied air in listening to the gradually approaching sounds.

"The music is very sweet and sad,^{Over} entirely!" dropping her knitting-work. "Ca^m's venge-Luco, Tom, and ask what it mean

“Joaquim and Luco don’t understand anything but Portuguese,” put in Gerald, reëntering with the monkey on his head. “There’s no use in calling them, Tom; they’ll not understand your question.”

“I can talk to them in Latin,” said Tom; “and sure Latin is the king of all languages” —

“Hog Latin?” murmured Gerald, innocently.

“If you mean that my Latin is hog Latin, I’ll” —

“Boys, boys!” interrupted Mrs. Desmond, reproachfully.

“Come out all of you,” cried Gerald, again running to the veranda. The others followed him. Along the road that skirted the garden a long dusky line of people was moving toward the city to the music of measured chant. The procession was composed of negroes, both men and women. Each of them bore a burden on his or her head. Some carried stones and mortar, others bricks and planks. Among them were Joaquim and Luco.

Seeing Gerald in the veranda, Luco rolled his although es, dropped his load, and having language of ersault, grinned from ear to ear and

One evenin_eindle of wood.

Para, the mem.

"Poor creatures!" said kind-hearted Mrs. Desmond. "It's a hard life! Not only working all day for others, but at night, too!"

"I'll go and find out where they are going." And before anybody could interfere, Gerald had darted after the receding procession.

They returned to the inner room. In a short time Gerald rushed in hot and breathless.

"It's a church!" he announced.

"What's a church?" asked his mother. "Sit down and be quiet until you can talk plainly."

"They're all Catholics," he said, after the pause of an instant, "and they want to build a church in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and so at night they carry the material to the place where they're building it."

"I'd like to help in the good work," said Tom; "I didn't think there was so much gumption in these black fellows."

"We're all too apt to judge a book by its cover, Tom," said Mary.

"An' sure people judged him by his cover they'd have a bad opinion of him entirely!" cried Gerald, running out to escape Tom's vengeance.

Tom resumed his recitation, and the others the occupations which the negroes had interrupted. Their peace was soon broken, however. Voices were heard outside, and Gerald poked in his head.

“By the hoky poky!” he called out, scarcely able to speak for laughter.

“Behave yourself, Gerald,” his mother said, severely.

“I can’t help it. Here’s an old scarecrow without, and he says his name is Captainnehemiahslammer!”

“What?” demanded Mr. Desmond.

“Maybe it’s an Indian chief,” said Mary, turning pale.

“Look out for your scalps!” cried Gerald.
“Come in, Captain Nehemiahslammer.”

III.

STRANGE PROCEEDINGS.

GERALD'S unceremonious invitation was immediately accepted. A man, accompanied by two boys, entered the room. This man was not an Indian chief, and the Desmonds lost all fear for their scalps in the surprise excited by his singular appearance and manner.

He was remarkably tall and thin, very much resembling a long fence-rail clothed in a tightly-buttoned green coat, wide linen pantaloons, and a palm-leaf hat as large as a small umbrella. His face was nearly hidden in a mass of dark whiskers, from which his red nose appeared like a beacon light. His small restless grey eyes glanced quickly at each person in the room.

He took off his hat, nodded stiffly, and then began to speak in a harsh voice like the creaking of an ungreased cart-wheel.

"I am Captainnehe——," he began, running his words into one another and talking very fast

—“I am Captainnehemiahslammer, of the brig Swallow.”

Mr. Desmond looked puzzled. “I don’t understand Portuguese,” he said; “but if you’ll take a seat, sir, I’ll send for one of the slaves.”

“He is talking English, sir,” said the taller of the two boys, who had remained near the door. “Please speak more slowly, captain,” he added, turning to the stranger; “these people don’t understand you.”

“It is very singular,” said the captain, making a distinct pause after every word—“it is very singular that some people cannot understand the plainest language. I announced myself to that youngster there”—he pointed to Gerald—“but he only laughed and asked me to say that jaw-breaker again. I’m a fast talker, I admit; for, you see, when I was a baby there was a mill right opposite my father’s domicile, and as I was an ambitious baby, I tried to cry as fast as that mill clacked. The consequence was that when I began to talk I actually left the clacking of that mill nowhere. I beat it hollow! Fact!”

He looked around to observe the effect of this speech, and then resumed:

“I am Captain Nehemiah Slammer, of the brig, Swallow, Eastport, Maine.” He assumed an oratorical attitude, and waved his hand in the direction of the boys. “I come on a mission of charity. These, ladies and gentlemen, these are orphans. Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, and afflicted as I am with a guitar on my breast”—

“That accounts for the music of his voice,” whispered Gerald to Mary.

“Gerald!” spoke Mrs. Desmond’s warning voice.

“Afflicted as I am, it is difficult to talk like Themistockings.”

“Who?” asked Gerald, edging up to one of the new boys.

“He means Themistocles.”

“Who is he? Is that your name?”

“Silence!” roared the captain, looking around fiercely. “Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it is a difficult matter to orate like Socrates, raise mingled emotions of the most high-falutin’ description in the breasts of a large and intellectual audience like Marc Antony over the body of

Brutus, and I can only say, with tears in my eyes, these are orphings."

Mr. Desmond began to think that the singular orator was either insane or intoxicated. He turned to the boys for an explanation. The elder, who was apparently about as old as Pat, approached Mr. Desmond's seat.

"My brother and I are orphans, as the captain says," the boy said, a slight flush tinging his cheeks. "We have come to Brazil in the Swallow under his protection. We want to go to our uncle's house, near Olydos. Our uncle has sent no one to take us thither, and the captain has come to place us in your care during the journey."

The boy made his short explanation in a manly, candid way that prepossessed Mr. Desmond in his favor.

"Are you from England?"

"No, we are Americans. We have always lived in New York. Three months ago my mother died, and we were left alone. My father's brother lives here in Brazil; he sent for us, and so we came in Captain Slammer's vessel. Our name is Erle. I am Arthur—my brother is George Erle."

Mr. Desmond looked keenly at Captain Slammer, who was listening to the conversation. Slammer's restless eyes at once sought the ground. A feeling of distrust at once took possession of Mr. Desmond's mind.

"Do you want me to take charge of these boys?" he asked.

"They are orphings, sir; that is all I have to say," returned the captain—"they are orphings. If your heart is not formed of the hardest granite"—

"There's no need of all this talk at all, at all," interrupted Mr. Desmond. "If the boys' uncle lives at Olydos, I've no objection in life to let them travel with us, as soon as Senhor Raimundo's steward arrives. I'm sorry to hear that they're without father or mother, but that has nothing to do with the question. When the steward comes we'll start."

Captain Slammer broke forth in a speech expressive of deep gratitude. George Erle, a small, delicate-looking boy, had slowly and timidly crept up to Mrs. Desmond. He pulled at her sleeve to attract her attention.

"Don't let *him* take us away," he said, in a

terrified whisper. "O ma'am! you are good and kind; let us stay here."

"What do you mean, child?" Mrs. Desmond asked, taking the boy's hand in her own and smoothing back the soft, flaxen hair from his forehead with her motherly touch.

"Keep us from that man Slammer," he whispered. The boy actually trembled, and Mrs. Desmond was moved by the look of terror in his large blue eyes.

"What has he done that you should fear him so?"

"I cannot tell you now—but he has treated us cruelly. O ma'am! do not let him take us."

At last the captain finished his speech: "Come, youngsters," he said, "it's almost time to go to roost."

George Erle tightened his grasp on Mrs. Desmond's arm and looked up appealingly. She looked up reassuringly.

"Captain Slammer," she said, addressing him for the first time, "you will do me a favor by allowing the boys to remain with us until we start."

Captain Slammer hesitated. He had his

reasons for not wishing to lose sight of the boys while they remained in Para. He muttered something about "trouble" and "want of room."

"We have plenty of room," said Mrs. Desmond; "and sure in this fine climate the boys needn't be in the house at all."

The captain became confused in his attempts to find an objection, and his words ran together again. Much to the surprise of her husband, Mrs. Desmond insisted that the boys should remain.

"I haven't time to discuss the matter now," said the captain, gruffly. "They must come aboard the Swallow."

George, trembling, clung to Mrs. Desmond. "O Arthur!" he cried, "don't go—don't go! Remember"—

The captain turned on the boy with the glare of a wild beast.

"You and he had better forget!" he hissed. "You shall come with me to-night, both of you!"

The man had suddenly lost his assumed eccentricity in the use of words, and the expression of uncouth simplicity in his face had changed to threatening anger.

“I will not go,” said Arthur, firmly. “On board the Swallow we were your slaves ; ashore we are free, and will remain so !”

“We shall see !”

In spite of his struggles Arthur was grasped violently by the strong arms of the captain and thrown upon the floor !

“Interfere, if you dare, sir,” said the captain, drawing a coil of rope from one of his pockets and proceeding to bind Arthur’s hands with it. “Interfere, if you dare. These boys were placed in my charge. I am their guardian for the present.”

“Father, I can’t stand here and see this kind of work going on !” cried Tom, rushing at the captain with clenched fists.

But his father’s hand restrained him.

“Be quiet, Tom,” said Mr. Desmond ; “this is my affair. Captain Slammer, there is no occasion for this violence. If you’ve a legal right to the boys, we’ll not seek to detain them by force.”

“He has no right,” cried Arthur. “Our friends placed us in the Swallow to be brought here. He has no right to force us back to his vessel.”

"There's sense in that!" exclaimed Tom.

"I'll have no interference," said Slammer, sullenly. "I was a fool to bring them ashore. I might have known the young vipers would have given trouble."

He seized Arthur, who, with his hands being bound, could make no effectual resistance. He then grasped George roughly by the shoulder.

Mr. Desmond placed himself between Slammer and the door.

"Are these boys to go with me to Olydos?" he demanded.

"That depends," responded the captain. "If they learn to hold their tongues before you start, I may send them with you. Get out of the way."

"The authorities shall know of this, or I'm no Irishman!" cried Mr. Desmond.

"Cheer up, boys," exclaimed the irrepressible Gerald. "You've friends who are not afraid of old Captainnehemiahslammer. Cheer up."

The two young Erles were dragged away, followed by the pitying glances of the Desmonds.

IV.

ON BOARD THE SWALLOW.

CAPTAIN SLAMMER'S brig *Swallow* lay idly on the brownish waters of the Para. The rosy tint of sunrise was yet tingeing the sky, casting a glad and lovely hue over city, river, forest, and the neat little brig herself, which, slowly rising and falling on the swelling water, seemed eager to burst from its anchor, and like its namesake, soar away with the fresh morning breeze.

Early as the hour was, everybody in Para seemed to be awake and stirring. The sound of the clanging bells and the explosion of gun-powder on shore announced that a day of rejoicing had dawned. Canoes, large and small, crossed and recrossed one another's track; gay flags and streamers floated in the air; brawny black slaves, plying their paddles, showed their white teeth and sang out cheerily. Even the faces of the Tapuyos, or civilized Indians, usually so stolid, relaxed slightly. It was a holy day, and the in-

habitants of Para had begun to keep it in their usual demonstrative way. The sun rose higher; the river no longer reflected the pink glow of the clouds, but turned into a myriad sparkling diamonds, and the white red-topped houses, with their background of kingly palms, were covered with a veil of golden light.

The scene around the Swallow was all beauty and brightness, but there were four persons on board the brig who were not exhilarated by the joyous influence of the newborn day. The first two of these four were Arthur and George Erle. Captain Slammer had forced the boys on board the brig late the night before. Arthur's wrists still bore the red marks of Slammer's cruel rope.

The captain had locked them in a small room, or rather, closet adjoining his own cabin.

Arthur was leaning against the wall in an attitude of despondency. George had climbed upon the narrow berth, and through the little window above it he was gazing mournfully on the blithe scene without.

The second two of these four were Captain Slammer and a young man who had just stepped on board the Swallow. This young man had

come from the shore in a canoe managed by two negro slaves. Ordering the slaves to remain in the canoe, he shook hands with Captain Slammer, who did not seem particularly pleased to see him, but who, nevertheless, invited him into his cabin.

The visitor seemed to be about twenty-five years of age. He was tall in stature, handsome in face; he never spoke without smiling, and when he smiled his lip curled sneeringly and a look of evil came into his eyes. His dress was that of a gentleman, plain, not gaudy, but rich. The ease and grace of his movements were in striking contrast to those of the ungainly Slammer.

"Fine morning, Slammer," said the visitor, coolly taking a chair and tilting it backwards. "I thought I'd come aboard and breakfast with you."

"You're very welcome, Mr. Erle," said the captain, with a look that belied his words. "I'll tell the cook to get up something extra."

"Don't trouble yourself, I beg—at least not until I've said a few words on a subject of more importance. Sit down, captain," said Erle.

His name was Martin Erle. He was a cousin of the boys imprisoned in the next room.

"How are my interesting relatives?"

The captain hesitated.

"Safe," he said, having in vain tried not to meet Erle's eye.

"Safe—out of the way—under water?"

"No," stammered Slammer, "they are safe, alive and well, here on board the Swallow."

"Is this the way in which you do the work?" began the visitor, in a raised angry tone.

"Wait until I explain. I"—

"You have broken your promise, Captain Slammer. Can you expect me to keep mine? I came on board the Swallow this morning in the expectation of finding that you had disposed of those youngsters. You know well that I have already told him that they are dead—accidentally drowned. I had depended on you to make part of my assertion a fact."

"I've done the best to get rid of 'em. They would be lying in the river, cold and still, at this moment, if—to tell you the truth, Martin Erle, I have a conscience"—

"You surprise me!"

“And I don’t like the idea of murdering two children—orphings, too.”

“Your conscience is extremely sensitive,” said Erle with his disagreeable smile. “Perhaps a stronger inducement than you have—say a few hundreds in hard cash—might make the idea less repelling. I have heard of such an effect being produced by like means.”

“I don’t like the idea,” said the captain, walking up and down the cabin excitedly. “I’m bad enough already—bad enough; but bad as I am, I can’t bring my mind to this! Last night I tried to get rid of the boys. I took them to that Irish family over there in Senhor Raimundo’s house. I asked Mr. Desmond to take them with him to Olydos. If the boys could be induced to hold their tongues, nobody would know them there, and they’d give no trouble.”

“Did I ever give you any cause to think me a fool, Captain Slamner?”

“On the contrary, you’ve always been”—

“More knave than fool, captain. So be it. I will not send these youngsters to Olydos. The boys would not hold their tongues and in a short time my uncle would know that I had lied to him.”

"They grew restive last night, and I had no means of keeping them quiet short of dragging them aboard; but"—

"There's no alternative. You must take care of them—you know how. I'm a poor man while they live."

"I can't do it," said the captain. "I wash my hands of this affair."

Captain Slammer placed himself in front of Martin Erle, and for the first time during the interview looked him full in the face. Martin Earle laughed.

"Don't get excited, *mon cher capitaine*. You wash your hands of this affair!"

"Yes," cried Captain Slammer, "I do."

"Sit down, captain, and let your thoughts go back three years. Do you remember a certain July day when you forged my uncle's name to a check, and, but—you seem agitated, Captain Slammer."

Slammer had sunk into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

"That forgery happened in New York, did it not?" continued Erle, smiling. "I discovered it, you remember, but I took care to keep the

discovery to myself. A word from me to the authorities and Captain Slammer, of the brig Swallow"—

"Stop--stop!" groaned the captain. "I am bad enough, bad enough, but I never thought I'd come to this. I know now what my old mother meant when she used to say, 'The way of the transgressor is hard' I've gone lower, step by step, until"— His sentence broke off with a groan.

"Wash your hands of the affair, captain, by all means, and *go to prison a convicted forger.*"

But Captain Slammer could not now turn back in his course of crime. No thought of prayer, no thought of resistance entered his mind. He could not face the consequences of his evil deed. He yielded to the tempter.

"Give me your directions," he said; "I will obey."

Martin Erle leaned over the table and whispered into the captain's ear:

"*To-night! The river!*"

Captain Slammer shuddered. A short time afterward the two went to breakfast.

V.

CAGED.

"ARTHUR," whispered George Erle, hastily descending from the perch on the berth and tapping his brother on the shoulder. "Arthur!"

But, lost in a reverie, Arthur neither heeded his words nor noticed his movement.

"Arthur!"

"Well?" said Arthur, somewhat impatiently. "I never saw a boy like you, George; you can't let a fellow be quiet a minute."

"I say, Arthur, do you hear our Cousin Martin's voice in Captain Slammer's cabin?"

Arthur raised his head and listened.

"We are all right now!" cried George, excitedly. "Cousin Martin has come for us. Don't you remember how kind he was when he visited us in New York? He took me to a theatre and—there! he is talking again. Do you hear him?"

"I hear him too well," said Arthur.

“Let us call out, shout, kick against the door, to let him know that we’re cooped up here! Cousin Martin! Cousin”—

“Hush!” said Arthur, with a sternness in his tone that surprised his brother.

The partition between the captain’s cabin and the boys’ room was very slight. Every word of the conversation between Slammer and Martin Erle could be distinctly heard by the prisoners.

“We must not listen,” said George. “They may be talking about private business. It would be dishonorable to listen.” And George stuck his fingers into his ears. “Call out, Arthur, or I’ll call out, and let him know we’re here!”

“Be quiet for a moment,” whispered the elder. “This conversation concerns us. It is most important that we should hear it. Oh! to think that such men can exist!”

Arthur’s face paled and his eyes flashed, as he drank in the full meaning of his cousin’s words. George’s fingers gradually left his ears as the conversation in the cabin progressed. His brother’s agitation filled him with concern and wonder.

“To-night! The river!”

The words spoken by Martin Erle, made them both shiver.

George crept toward his brother, and, taking his hand, looked up into Arthur's face with an expression of horror in his large blue eyes.

"Arthur, dear Arthur, must we die? Does he really mean us—his cousins?"

"Yes, bear it bravely, George; he really means us. He would drown us, the monster! And we are caged in—at his mercy."

"Is there no hope—no one to save us?"

George was accustomed to regard his brother as almost infallible, and he waited for his reply, as if it would carry life or death with it.

"There is no one to save us."

"There is God," cried George, his face lighting up; "the prayers of those in Heaven who love us will surely be answered. Let us invoke them. Surely you have not forgotten them." And the boy fell on his knees, and Arthur, with a new feeling of hope, followed his example. Their prayer, though short, was earnest and heartfelt.

"God will help us, I know—I know!" said George.

"We can now do our best," said Arthur.

He took a pocketbook from his coat, and tearing out a leaf, asked George for a pencil. George nervously fumbled in his pockets for one, and at last found it. Arthur hastily wrote some words on the paper.

"This must be sent to the Desmonds," he said, folding and addressing the note, "and they must get it as soon as possible or it will be of no use."

"But how can we send it? Have you thought of that?"

"I have thought of it, and I think the success of our plan depends upon the amount of money we have."

George eagerly turned his pockets inside out, and bringing to light a strange medley of odds and ends, consisting of a penknife, four rusty nails, some orange-skins, a collection of cancelled postage stamps, a comb, three corks, some gun-powder in a paper, but no money.

"All the money I have is locked up in our trunk," he said, despondently turning over this miscellaneous heap. "Oh, dear! and our trunk is in Captain Slammer's cabin."

"And I have not a cent," said Aruthur. "My

scheme will have to be given up. I intended to pay the sailor who brings us our breakfast to take or send this note over to the Desmonds."

"Do you think he would do it for nothing?"

"No. I've seen too much of Slammer's sailors to trust them if they were not first paid; I don't know what to do." Arthur sighed, wearily.

"It cannot be possible!" said George. "It is like a bad dream, or a page from a dime novel! and our cousin, too! Such a thing couldn't occur in real life! Even when I read in Shakespeare about King John trying to kill that poor, little prince, I did not believe it! It can't be!"

"We are in the way; we are in this wild country far from home; nobody knows; Cousin Martin—it is hard to believe,—but it is true; we heard it with our own ears!"

George now began to feel that the danger was very great when his brother succumbed before it. Arthur had usually done sufficient thinking for the two; for the first time George discovered that his thoughts might be of use. He searched his mind for an idea.

"I have it! I have it!" he suddenly exclaimed, tearing off his jacket and ripping open

a portion of its lining. The sinking fund ! the sinking fund ! ”

Arthur came out of his reverie and looked at George as if he thought he had gone crazy. George continued to cut the lining of his jacket, accompanying his work with numerous incoherent exclamations.

“ The sinking fund is all right ! ” he said, drawing several gold dollars from between the lining and the cloth. “ No sailor can resist these ! ” And he thrust them into Arthur’s hand. “ You see,” he continued, “ when I was at home I never could keep any money. I used to avoid the street where the confectioners’ stores were, but whenever I avoided a store I was certain to fall in with an apple-woman’s stand or something of that kind, and I couldn’t save any money until I thought of establishing a sinking fund. I haven’t touched it for a year. It took me a long time to save it, and here it is ! ”

“ You’re a trump, George,” said Arthur. “ We will give the sailor who brings our breakfast one of these coins, and make him promise to take this note to Mr. Desmond at once.”

“ I wonder who’ll bring in our breakfast. I

hope Slammer will send Black Simon, the cook, or that red-headed sailor, who is always so jolly. I say, perhaps he may not give us any breakfast!"

"I wouldn't be surprised," said Arthur, bitterly. "It's not worth while to waste food on two miserable boys who are to be"—

"Don't! don't!" implored George, shuddering. "Oh, I can't believe it, Arthur; it is too terrible! There must be some mistake!"

"I wish I could think so, but I can't. At any rate we'll meet our fate like men, if the worst comes to the worst. When mother died she told me to take care of you, and"— His voice broke, and he could go no further.

"Don't think of me, Arthur; I am not afraid; besides, I don't believe Slammer or Martin Erle will dare to hurt us. Why should they?"

"We are in Martin Erle's way to wealth, and Captain Slammer will do anything that our cousin wishes."

Steps sounded in Slammer's cabin, accompanied by the clatter of dishes.

"The man is coming with breakfast," whispered George. "Now's our time for sending the note."

The door opened, and Captain Slammer entered with a tray containing the breakfast things. Saying nothing, he deposited his burden on the floor and left the room, not forgetting to lock the door after him.

“We’re lost!” groaned Arthur. “There’s nothing left for us to do”—

“But to wait and pray!” sobbed George, throwing himself on the berth in an agony of disappointment.

VI.

HOPE.

SLAMMER had brought the boys a bountiful breakfast, consisting of chocolate, cake, covered with cinnamon and the fruit of the peach-palm. This fruit is very nutritious, and tastes like a mixture of chestnuts and cheese. The boys were hungry, and this array of good things looked very tempting.

“Well,” said Arthur, “there’s no use in starving ourselves, for we will need all our strength after a while.”

George made a gesture of disgust, but as the savory odor of chocolate floated to his nostrils he followed his brother’s example, and began to eat. In a short time the tray was cleared of everything but the dishes. The thoughts of the boys again turned to the peril of their position.

“We have the whole day before us,” said George, hopefully, “something may happen.”

“We cannot afford to trust to what may happen,” said Arthur, “we must help ourselves.”

Arthur went to the window above the berth and gazed upon the gay scene without.

A great raft had arrived the night before ; it rose and fell on the magnificent Amazon,—the largest river in the world,—and, anxious as he was, Arthur could not help being interested in this “*jangada*.” It was made of precious woods, and, when separated, would sell for thousands of dollars. It contained the wax palm and the iron wood ; upon it were several houses, and near one of these a little monkey swung in a liana.

The canoe in which Martin Erle had come aboard lay near the side of the Swallow. From the window Arthur could see a negro seated in the stern of the canoe, eating his breakfast of farina.

Arthur whistled softly. The negro raised his head. He was no other than Senhor Raimundo's Joaquim, who, when not busy about the affairs of the house, was allowed to hire himself out as a canoeman on the river. Joaquim was a very pious old man, and it was not often his custom to work on holy days ; but a few days before he had promised to convey some fresh provisions to Swallow. He had not been able to keep his

engagement, and, as the crew of the *Swallow* greatly needed vegetables and fruit, he was obliged to take this morning of leisure for supplying their wants. As the canoe was setting off from the wharf, Martin Erle had offered himself as a passenger.

Arthur Erle could speak a little Portuguese. During the voyage he had studied the grammar of that language, and learned the pronunciation from a Portuguese sailor. He addressed Joaquim. Using his paddle dexterously, the negro brought the canoe directly under the window. Arthur was agreeably surprised to discover that Joaquim lived in the same house as the Desmonds. Joaquim promised to deliver the note to Mr. Desmond. Arthur offered him money.

“No, Senhor,” he said, gravely, “I cannot take wages for that.”

He swung the canoe back to its former place just as Captain Slammer and Martin Erle were heard talking on the deck. Slammer was announcing his intention of going ashore, and giving his orders to his mate in the quick, incoherent manner which had greatly astonished the Desmonds.

Slammer, Martin Erle, and the canoeman got into the canoe. Joaquim gave Arthur a reassuring glance, and then applied himself to the task of propelling the boat toward the shore. Arthur held his breath, fearing that the captain might change his mind and turn back. Anxiously he watched the canoe until it touched the shore.

"George," he cried, "I've sent the note. The Desmonds will never desert us, I am sure. There was something too sincere and honest about them for that."

"The next question is, what can they do?"

"They will send the police on board, of course; but the real question is, what shall we do?"

"If Captain Slammer were not on board"—

"Captain Slammer has just gone ashore."

"Let us get out of prison then."

"Easier said than done."

"Where there's a will there's a way: and when a man's in the right there's nothing that can stop him if he gets ahead."

"Except stone walls, and locks, and strong doors, and"—

"No; when a man's right God helps him, and

then stone walls and all obstacles are nothing." George's pale face flushed, and his soft, boyish voice took a louder, fuller tone.

Arthur grasped the door knob and shook it violently. Somebody chuckled in the captain's cabin.

"Who's there?" called out Arthur.

"Simon," answered the voice of the black cook. "Dat's no go, young massa; no use ob rattlin' de door, for de cap'in is gone way wid de key in his pocket. What's you chil'n been a-doin? Stealin' sugar or sumphin? Yah! yah! yah!"

"Can't you help us get out, Simon?"

"Golly! no! 'Fraid ob de cap'n; and dis yere chile got 'nuff to tend to. Golly! smell de soup a-burnin'." And Simon hurried away.

Both boys stood near the door. George was looking attentively at the lock. An idea occurred to him. Among the miscellaneous contents of his pockets he had several nails. He took out one of these and thrust it into the key-hole. He pushed it about in the lock.

Old Simon, passing through the cabin, heard the noise. "None ob dat, young gen'plum, none

ob dat! Possums can't get out ob de trap. Yah! yah!" It seemed like a very good joke to him, and he chuckled over it for nearly an hour.

George used all his small skill with the nail, but the door still remained fast.

A boy who loses hope will never be a real man. George and Arthur did not lose hope, and by way of keeping up their spirits, turned their attention to the "*jangada*." It seemed wonderful to them; it was a floating island; it had on its surface flowers and shrubs, and the long snake-like liana bore large crimson flowers which shone through the green that covered the house. A passing steamer sent rows of small waves dashing upon the raft, and the small monkey, frightened, dropped from the swaying liana and was thrown through the port-hole. Had not Arthur been very quick, he would have been struck in the eyes. As it was, the little animal, with a cry like that of a terrified child, fell into the lower berth. Arthur lifted him, and caressed the tiny young thing. George offered him some of the fruit of the peach palm. He ate it, and then laid his head against the boy's shoulder,

with a short, plaintive cry. The boys noticed that he had a tiny silver bracelet upon one of his legs.

“He wants to go back to his mother,” Arthur said.

“Don’t let us keep him,” said George, with a sigh. “There, little beauty!” and the monkey was gently pushed through the port-hole; he landed safe on the green foliage on the raft.

* * * * *

When Joaquim arrived at Senhor Raimundo’s house with the note for Mr. Desmond he found none of the family at home but Tom and Gerald. Mr. and Mrs. Desmond had gone to visit the rice-mills of a neighboring planter. They had taken Mary with them.

Luckily Arthur had written the words “Important—please give instant attention,” under the address.

“It might be something I can attend to,” said Tom, taking the note. “Do you think I’d better open it now or wait until father returns to-night?”

“Since you condescend to ask my advice, I’ll

say, open it. Father wouldn't have anything delayed that is important and needs instant attention."

"You're right, Gerald. From whom did you receive it, Joaquim?"

Joaquim described the manner in which he had received the note.

"It would take at least three hours to send it up to the rice-mills, which would be a waste of time; if the message really requires instant attention, I'll read it."

"Mr. Desmond," the note ran, "the two boys who were brought to you last night by Captain Slammer are in great danger. They are on board the Swallow—threatened by speedy death. Come and save them. If you hesitate they are lost. Lose no time.

"ARTHUR ERLE."

"What can he mean?" said Tom, rereading the note and looking bewildered.

"He means what he says. That Captain Nehemiahslam is at some of his tricks. Will you lend us your canoe, Joaquim?"

"Where's Luco? Luco! Luco!"

Luco appeared from the garden, where he had
th.

been apparently working very hard, but really doing nothing.

"Come, Luco! Tom!" said Gerald, excitedly.
"Come!"

"Where do you intend to go?" demanded Tom.

"To the Swallow in Joaquim's canoe. We'll confront Captainslam, and find out all about this. Come, Luco!"

Luco grinned and followed Gerald.

"Stay, Gerald! Hadn't we better go to the American consul or somebody?"

"There's no time to lose!" cried Gerald, impatiently.

Gerald and Luco hastened down the street, and a few minutes afterward were seated in Joaquim's canoe. Tom followed their example reluctantly. He doubted the prudence of this course, and yet he could not desert his brother. His expostulations were useless.

Luco, assisted a little by Gerald, paddled toward the Swallow, and the canoe soon drew up beside her.

Gerald and Tom climbed up the side. The time was shortly after twelve o'clock. The

crew were below at dinner. On deck there was nobody but a sailor asleep in the hot sun.

Gerald, lithe and active, reached the deck first. Tom was slower.

"Now, Gerald," he said, with a spice of malice, "you insisted on coming; take the lead."

For an instant Gerald seemed perplexed. "I'll—I'll,—what would you do, Tom?"

Before Tom could answer, a head appeared above the opening in the deck. It was soon followed by the body and legs of George Erle, and when George had reached the deck, Arthur appeared. Arthur put his finger to his lips and pointed to the sleeping sailor.

"Can you take us ashore immediately?" he whispered.

"Yes!" said Tom.

The four boys got into the canoe, Luco and Gerald took the paddle.

"Free at last!" murmured George, with a great sigh of relief.

Arthur clasped Tom's hand in silent gratitude.

"To the forest! to the forest!" suddenly cried Gerald.

The boys looked at him, alarmed by his tone.

“Look!” he called.

Between them and the city was a boat, and in its stern was Captain Slammer, on his way to the Swallow.

“Lie down!” cried Tom. “Heads down!”

It was too late, Slammer had seen and pointed to them.

Arthur saw a figure on the raft, which was on their left. It was the figure of a young girl, and the monkey sat on her shoulder. Gerald's paddle caught in the liana which,—it stretched over many yards,—trailed in the water. The liana has the strength and elasticity of a snake, and Gerald could not disentangle his paddle from its tendrils. The young girl, seeing that the boys were pursued, stepped to the edge of the raft, and with great skill, set Gerald's paddle free. The monkey, who seemed to recognize his friends, danced about in glee, and grinned with delight, as the canoe shot away, further out of the reach of Slammer.

Away on the line of the great river Amazon stretched the mysterious forest. What wealth it contained for those who could explore it; its very woods were as precious as silver. Who

could say how far it extended or what strange men and beasts dwelt in its depths.

“To the forest!” echoed Arthur.

“The beasts will not be fiercer than Slammer,” thought George.

The girl and the monkey on the raft encouraged the boys with their voices.

“They will escape!” cried the captain. “Somebody stop the young villains. Thieves! Thieves!”

Nobody, who could have been of the slightest use to the captain, understood English;—so the canoe glided through the waters, and the hope of freedom grew stronger in the hearts of the two boys who felt as if a nightmare had passed from them.

“Stop them!” cried Slammer. “Villains! Thieves! Stop them!”

Luco laughed; and, as he looked back, the little monkey seemed to be laughing, too.

VII.

CHASED BY SLAMMER.

“To the forest! to the forest!” called Tom. “Slammer’s boat is between us and the city. The forest is our only place of refuge!”

Luco seemed to understand the state of affairs. His paddle spurned the water with great force and regularity. But Gerald was less skillful. He did his best; his best, however, was not equal to Luco’s worst.

Captain Slammer was in his gig. It had been sent after him to the city. He had left Martin Erle, and was returning to the Swallow when he caught sight of the canoe containing his late prisoners. Two sailors were rowing his gig. He sat in the stern, steering.

“The youngsters are making for the forest!” he exclaimed. “We’ll soon stop that. Make the oars bend, my boys.”

The city of Para is hemmed in by the vast forest on all sides landward. Once in the intricate labyrinth of the wilderness, the boys felt that

they could defy the whole crew of the Swallow to find them. Gradually their canoe was nearing the shore ; but Slammer's boat was close to them. The distance between the gig and the canoe was sensibly lessening.

Slammer's boat shot through the water with the rapidity of an arrow sent from a well-strung bow. The oars of his sailors rose and fell with the precision of clock-work, and Slammer knew in perfection the art of managing the rudder. Joaquim's canoe had no rudder, and Luco's efforts to steer with the paddle were often counteracted by the ignorant, but well-meant, endeavors of Gerald to assist him.

Nearer and nearer came the gig. Arthur's eyes and cheeks glowed with excitement. He felt so useless—so utterly helpless. He could do nothing but stand there with throbbing heart and bursting brain.

"Luco! Gerald! Work like men! A few more strokes and we are safe!" cried Tom. "Keep as near shore as you can."

"Never give up, young senhor!" returned Luco, in one of the few English phrases he knew. "Luco never give up."

“Hurrah, boys! hurrah!” cried Captain Slammer. “We’ll run alongside of ’em in another moment.”

A cry of despair broke from Arthur Erle. The canoe was now coasting along the shore, but the dense growth which seemed to rise directly out of the water prevented the boys from landing. A long branch of the great mimosa projected, with its pendulous leaves and clinging vines, not far above the surface of the water. Gerald’s paddle unfortunately became entangled in the net-work of twining parasites that hung from this tree and was violently jerked from his hands.

The boys lowered their heads. The canoe passed under the branch and then spun around helplessly in the stream. What could Luco do with his one paddle?

The state of affairs caused Slammer’s triumphant exclamation.

“Lost! lost!” muttered Arthur.

Tom rolled up his sleeves, and brandishing his fists, bounded to the stern of the canoe, to be in readiness to give Slammer a warm reception; but his mood changed, his hands involuntarily

clasped themselves together, and his voice rose in unison with George's prayer.

"Auxilium Christianorum! Ora pro nobis!" muttered Luco in the language common to all Catholics.

Poor Gerald, striving frantically to paddle with his hands, turned his head and watched the rapid progress of Slammer's boat.

The canoe was now almost stationary. Slammer's boat was not twenty yards away from it.

The sailors bent to their work.

No sound broke the stillness save the measured dip of the oars and the distant voices on the river. To the boys these seemed like sounds from another world.

In another moment the gig would pass under the bough of the zamang tree. In another moment the boys would be captives of Captain Slammer.

The words of prayer died from George's lips. He could only say them in his heart. Scarcely venturing to draw breath, the boys waited.

In his eagerness Captain Slammer still stood in the stern, leaning forward ready to grasp his prey.

“Auxilium Christianorum! Ora pro nobis!” repeated Luco.

“Ora pro nobis!” murmured the boys.

The fore part of the gig had passed under the bough of the zamang tree.

There was a splash—a groan—an exclamation from one of the sailors. Captain Slammer’s head had come violently in contact with the projecting bough. It had hurled him into the water.

He rose to the surface some distance behind the gig. The sailors reversed the “order of their rowing.” The gig glided backward and he was helped on board.

The boys had not wasted time while the captain’s mishap was taking place. At this part of the forest a number of trees bent outward toward the river. To many of them masses of flowering vines had attached themselves. From one of these trees, which had grown outward in its struggle to reach the light, a long length of vine, with a tough, thick stem, had become loosened. It trailed far into the river. Gerald grasped it and called to Luco.

By means of this natural rope the boys drew the canoe to the shore before the captain had re-

gained the boat. As soon as Gerald's feet touched dry land his usual spirit and saucy audacity returned to him.

"My dear friend," he shouted, bowing profoundly to the dripping captain, "you were not born to be drowned. A higher fate awaits you."

"You young scoundrel!" muttered the captain.

But the boys had not waited to hear his parting speech. They had already disappeared in the forest.

"Brave young 'uns," said Jack Frost to his messmate, Tom Moggs.

"Blamed if it didn't go against me to follow 'em so. But a captain is a captain," answered Tom Moggs, resting on his oar. "Promulgated orders must be obeyed by maritime specimens of mankind, otherwise a general conglomeration may ensue."

"Whew! You have been swallerin' a dictionary, you have!"

"No, sir-e-e-e! You ain't used to larnin', that's all," returned Moggs, forgetting his grandiloquent style; but he recovered himself. "You are not

accustomed to enjoy the effervescing influence of erudition"—

"Shut up! Don't want to be, either. What's the cap'n goin' to do next?"

"I am not in the confidence of our commander," said Moggs, eyeing his comrade with pitying contempt, and helping himself liberally to that comrade's open paper of tobacco which lay on the seat between them.

Moggs was a short, stout individual, with a fat, round face and large, staring eyes. His head was adorned by a crop of wiry black hair, which always stood on ends "like quills upon the fretful porcupine." After Moggs had his hair cut his hat would be worn on his head like anybody's, but in a month's time his hair would grow, his hat would rise gradually until it stood half a foot from his forehead. When these stubborn bristles were unshorn he seemed to be in a state of constant fright.

Captain Slammer stood in the boat. The water was dripping from his clothes. He was lost in thought, and he had forgotten the uncomfortable state of his garments.

"Well, cap'n?"

The scowl on his brow grew blacker.

“We will land,” he said, savagely, “and follow the young rascals. I’ll pay them for this with a vengeance.”

In a short time the gig grated against the trunk of a half-submerged tree, and Slammer, with his two sailors, entered the forest on the track of the boys.

VIII.

AMONG THE ROOTS.

SPEAKING at intervals low words of encouragement to one another, the boys made their way farther and farther into the forest. The ground was covered with tangled ferns and thick masses of decaying fruit and leaves. It was hard work to make way through the debris. Their run soon subsided into a slow trot.

The solemn gloom and silence of the forest seemed terrible to the boys, who had just left the brightness and life of the river.

It was as if they had entered another world. Their footfalls made no noise among the soft leaves, and, excepting the distant cry of some wild animal, the stillness was profound.

An hour passed, and still their unvarying tramp continued. George was the first to give out. He threw himself down at the foot of a sapucaya tree, exhausted and panting. The other boys halted at once.

"It's no use," said George, gasping for breath. "I can't go on."

The boys stood around him, perplexed and troubled.

"Don't wait for me," he said. "Leave me here, and I'll follow after a while. Luco has a knife in his belt. You can mark the trees as you go along."

"By no manner of means," cried Gerald, warmly. "We'll carry him on our shoulders."

"We can't leave you here," said Arthur; "if Slammer were to come and find you here alone—heaven help you!"

"I move that we wait here and fight Slammer when he comes!" cried Gerald. "Five boys against three men."

Arthur interrupted:

"Slammer and his men have rifles."

"True for you," admitted Gerald, reluctantly.

"We are losing time," said Tom. "Luco is becoming uneasy. We have not found the road to the city yet."

Tom took hold of George by the arm and bade Arthur take the other. Supporting the exhausted boy in this manner, they proceeded some distance.

Gerald and Lucco lagged behind the others. They were becoming fatigued; besides, they found congenial occupation in playing ball with large cups of the sapucaya tree. These are called monkey's drinking cups, and are the capsules which contain the nuts. The sapucaya tree is very tall. At the top of the capsules is a neatly-fitting lid, and when the nuts are ripe this lid opens, the huge cup falls to the ground, scattering its contents in all directions. The sapucaya is of the same family as the Brazil-nut tree, the fruit of which is largely sold.

Having filled their pockets and hats with the sapucaya nuts, Gerald and Luco amused themselves by tossing the empty cups backward and forward to each other as they proceeded.

The two grew excited in their sport and forgot their weariness. Once Gerald sent the woody cup with such force toward Luco that it knocked the young lad's rimless hat some yards away, while its treasure of sapucaya nuts was lost in the thicket of ferns. Luco grinned, recovered his hat, threw the cup at his opponent, and in a second Gerald's hat was flying in the air.

George, looking back, smiled; but the smile

soon died away ; he fell against his friends, who caught him.

“Thank you, Tom—thank you, Arthur,” he said, relieving them of his weight. “I am all right now.”

“Are you sure of that ?”

“Quite sure, Tom—thank you. Don’t halt. Look through that opening in the trees.”

George spoke calmly, pointing backward with one hand, while he watched Tom’s face attentively. Tom and Arthur looked back. No one spoke.

On all sides our boys were surrounded by immense trees, draped with twisting, creeping plants. Just here they seemed to be in a room hung with tapestry of the loveliest hues. They were shrouded in the pensive grey of twilight. Through the opening by which they had entered Tom and Arthur were gazing. Beyond this opening in the foliage some rays of twilight had stolen, trickling down the stems of the vines and gilding their leaves and blossoms. Where the sunlight fell the scene in contrast to the gloom that surrounded the boys seemed as light as day.

“Well ?” said George.

"I see nothing extraordinary," answered Tom.

"I thought I saw a figure much like Slammer's cross the open space."

"Slammer so near us? Impossible!" commented Arthur.

Tom kept his eyes fixed on the space beyond the opening.

"Faith, you're right, George. It is Slammer. He is on our track in earnest."

Arthur turned pale and waited for Tom to speak again.

"It is Slammer and his sailors. They are searching for us among the roots of that monster of a tree. May they look till they find us!"

"We had better go on as fast as we can," said Arthur.

"No," said Tom. "We are all too tired to go much farther. Our best plan is to get with as little noise as possible into yonder tall ferns and watch Slammer, and"—

"Excuse me," said George. "I've a good idea. We can watch Slammer, as you say, and if he comes in this direction we can steal around, and really hide among the roots of that huge tree where he is now looking for us."

Tom nodded approvingly.

“A good idea. He will never think of searching for us where he once looked.”

Tom, Arthur and George were soon ensconced in the clump of tall ferns, and after a time Gerald and Luco followed them. It took all Arthur's knowledge to explain their plan to Luco. Luco exhibited the whites of his eyes, and showed that the scheme pleased him by repeating rapidly his choicest English words :

“Bully for you, old coon—bully for you ! bully for you !”

Luco studied our language under the direction of an old sailor who had been a guest at Senhor Raimundo's house in Para for a day or two. His knowledge, therefore, was not extensive, but he was in blissful ignorance of that.

The reader no doubt thinks that the roots of a tree would not form an effective concealment for the boys. The following extract from the book of an eminent naturalist will explain the boys' reason for selecting their hiding-place better than I can. Speaking of the massaranduba, and other monstrous trees near Para, Mr. Bates says :

“A very remarkable feature in those trees is

the growth of buttress-like projections around the lower part of the stems. The space between these buttresses, which are generally thin walls of wood, form spacious chambers, and may be compared to stalls in a stable; some of them are large enough to hold half a dozen persons. The purpose of these structures is obvious, at first glance, as that of the similar props of brick-work which support a high wall.

“It is then seen that they are the roots which have raised themselves ridge-like out of the earth; growing gradually upward as the increasing height of the tree required augmented support.”

In one of the stall-like chambers of the mas-saranduba which Slammer was now examining it was the intention of the boys to seek refuge.

Slammer and the sailors soon finished their search. With disappointment written on their faces they approached the clump of ferns. The boys scarcely dared to breathe until their pursuers had passed out of sight.

Their tranquillity did not last long. In a short time voices were heard. Captain Slammer and the sailors were returning, grumbling and swearing as they came.

IX.

A WOODEN COW.

THE sound of the voices of Captain Slammer and the sailors grew louder as they approached the boys' hiding-place among the rocks of the massaranduba, or cow-tree.

"I tell you, Moggs," cried Slammer, "I'll capture these young rascals if I have to follow them to the end of the world."

"Well, cap'n," said Moggs, "if you want to go to the end of the world, I don't think you ought to expect us to follow you. I don't want to go to the end of the world. Do you, Jack Frost?"

"No, sir," said Jack Frost. "The end of the world will come to us some day, and then cap'n, you will be sorry for persecuting these youngsters."

"Hold your tongue, Jack Frost!" roared Slammer. "Who commands the Swallow, you or I?"

"We are not on board the Swallow now, cap'n. We didn't join your crew to go tramping through

the wilderness after a lot of boys. I'll not go any farther."

"Nor I," said Frost.

"Wait till I get you on board the Swallow, my hearties," muttered the captain; but he took care not to say it aloud.

The captain and his mutinous sailors were now very near the giant massaranduba. The boys had listened in breathless silence to the above conversation. The two sailors were armed with rifles. In fact, they rarely went any distance from Para without them. Captain Slammer also carried one; he thrust the butt of it into every thicket that he passed, in the hope that the boys might be hidden there.

"They must be somewhere near," he said, stopping a few yards from the massaranduba. "Their tracks among the ferns are very plain."

"There's no good in looking among the roots of that tree again," said Frost. "We searched there through and through."

"I'll try again," retorted the captain, approaching the tree.

"We are lost now," whispered George.

Luco saw the danger and resolved to avert it.

“Stay,” he said to Arthur. “Not come. I go.”

Suiting the action to the word, he stealthily left his place among the roots. Captain Slammer had stopped to examine the prints left by the boys' feet on the damp ground. Stealing noiselessly along behind the screen of fern and hanging vines, Luco did not halt until he was about fifty yards from the cow-tree. Captain Slammer was still attentively examining the footprints. Luco waited until he raised his head, and uttered an exclamation. Slammer's attention was at once attracted to him. Luco's rimless palm-leaf hat was visible above the tall fern.

“Frost! Moggs! here they are,” cried Slammer, “I knew they were here!”

Luco sprang from his ambush and disappeared among the trees. Slammer, Frost, and Moggs followed him at full speed.

When they had vanished in the forest the boys turned to one another in silence, each expecting another to say what was to be done next. Tom was the first to speak.

“Luco has drawn our pursuers from our track

for the present, but they will probably return when they find that he is alone."

"We cannot remain where we are, that is certain," said Arthur. "Had we not better make most of our time and push back toward the river?"

"And then?"

"Why, find the canoe, and paddle to the city. There is probably a road leading to Para, but we can scarcely hope to reach it without guidance."

"There is only one objection to your plan. Neither you nor George can tell in what direction the river lies, and I cannot."

Tom's words filled them all with a sudden terror. Simultaneously the thought flashed into their minds—the dread thought that they were lost in the forest.

"Gerald," continued Tom, coolly, "from what side did we come?"

Gerald reflected a moment and pointed to the left; but Arthur and George were sure that they had come from the opposite direction.

"I do not know," said Tom. "I acknowledge that I am wholly at sea. There's no use, sure,

in disguising the truth. We have to look the worst in the face. We are lost."

"If Luco would only return," said Gerald.

"I doubt that even Luco could help us. I don't think that he has ever ventured thus far into the forest before to-day," said Tom.

"If we could but see the sun," said George, "it might direct our course."

But they could not see the sun. The colossal trees shut the sky from them. The rays of sunlight that had earlier made their way through the interstices had now disappeared, and the shades of dusk were falling upon what had lately been the brightest part of the forest.

"We cannot remain where we are," said Tom. "Slammer and the sailors may return at any moment."

"Luco knows the forest better than they," observed Gerald. "Faith, he'll lead them a fine chase. Good, kind Luco, to do so much for us!"

"We must change our quarters immediately," said Tom. "Night is coming, and it is necessary to find some sort of shelter."

"And build a fire, to keep off beasts of prey. Jaguars, pumas, and other wild animals abound."

"You forget, Arthur, that if we build a fire, the blaze will inform Captain Slammer of our whereabouts," said George.

"True, I forgot that."

"We are wasting precious time in talk," said Tom, somewhat impatiently. "As we came along I noticed another massaranduba in that hollow through which the brook flows. We had best move thither, and trust to God."

The brook to which Tom alluded flowed into a hollow, and formed a very small but deep lake around a portion of higher ground on which stood the massaranduba.

By throwing part of a decayed tree-trunk across the brook, the boys succeeded in reaching the massaranduba. The capacious root-chamber around at its bases would have easily contained twice their number.

"Hurrah!" cried Gerald in high glee; "we are on a little island of our own now. When we pull over our tree-trunk I'll defy Slammer to cross the bridgeless chasm. That sounds like a sentence from the 'Seven Champions,' or 'Jack, the Giant-killer.' Doesn't it, Tom?"

"Gerald, I don't understand how you can be

so foolish and light at such a time," said Tom, rebukingly.

"If we are in a tight place, is that any reason why we should get melancholy, Mr. Kill-joy?"

And Gerald exerted himself to pull the bridge across; but the assistance of the others was necessary. This done, they found themselves on a little island, protected from the visits of wild beasts from without by the circling stream.

"It's supper-time," said Gerald, with a comical grin. "And I, for one, feel mightily like taking a bite and a sup."

Where was supper to come from?

Luckily, Arthur remembered that he had stowed away several of Luco's oranges and bananas for future use. Tom had done the same, and on searching, Gerald found that he had not wholly exhausted his pocket's supply of sapucaya-nuts.

"If we had some tea or coffee," said George, "this kind of a supper would not be so bad."

"I think I can supply you with a beverage—milk," said Arthur.

George stared at him in surprise.

"Where's your cow?"

"There's a wooden one very near you."

"Blarney," commented Gerald, with his mouth full of banana.

"I have read," said Arthur, "that this massaranduba, or cow-tree, produces milk. If I had any vessel"—

"Here's a sapucaya cup," interrupted Gerald. Arthur took it, and, having found a proper place in the tree, cut the bark with his penknife. In a short time he entered the root-chamber with the sapucaya cup half full of milk. Without standing on ceremony, the boys drank from the cup in turn.

"You must not take much," said Arthur, "for though a small quantity is harmless and pleasant, a very large quantity has been known to prove very hurtful."

"Pretty good—almost equal to milk of a real cow, barring a slight touch of rankness," said Tom.

"If you will let it stand it will thicken to a very tenacious glue, and it is used as a cement."

"Milk from a tree-cow!" exclaimed Gerald, admiringly. "Who'd have thought it? Well,

there is some use in readin' after all, if it helps you to find out such wonders as that."

The boys said the rosary in unison, and then, as the sable shroud of night was draped over the forest, they sunk to sleep on their heaps of dead leaves, in spite of the harsh cries of the forest animals which at first seemed sufficiently loud and shrill to prevent even the hope of repose.

To these boys, lost in the depth of the forest, balmy sleep brought golden dreams of home, and their guardian angels watched them well.

X.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

NOTHING disturbed the repose of the boys during the night. Arthur was the first to open his eyes. He had been dreaming of Slammer and of the startling events of the previous day; his heart gave a throb of joy as he awoke to find himself no longer in the close cabin of the Swallow. The light of early morning was beginning to make its way through the closely interwoven branches.

“It’s morning,” said Arthur, seizing Gerald by the shoulder and trying to shake him into wakefulness. “Come out, and take a walk. It’s time to get up.”

“Is it?” asked Gerald, in a drowsy voice; “all right!” And he sank down among the palm leaves, and was almost instantly lost in the land of dreams.

“Poor fellows!” thought Arthur. “They need rest.”

Having knelt and recited his morning prayer, he washed his face and hands in the clear brook, and feeling refreshed and exhilarated, he determined to set out in search of something for breakfast.

His preliminary act was to push the tree-trunk across the stream. This he accomplished with some trouble. He crossed the bridge and looking back at the massaranduba, a new solemn feeling came over him. His was the only conscious human mind in all that solitude. Boundless space and boundless solitude seemed to bring his soul nearer to God; it was as if he were alone with the Creator. He viewed the magnificent trees, the exquisite tracery of the ferns, and the graceful twining vines with admiration and awe. Each told him in a different way how wonderful must be the Hand that made it.

He wandered some distance from the massaranduba. At every step he took, some new wonder in vegetation astonished him. He entirely forgot the object of his walk, which was to obtain material for the morning meal. Groups of the slim assai palm especially attracted his attention. Its stem grows to the

height of twenty or thirty feet, and terminates in delicate, feathery plumes of foliage. The fruit of the assai (*euterpe oleracea*), which springs from a sheath several feet below the crown of leaves, is about the size of a cherry, and may be made into a thick, creamy beverage of violet-colored hue. This beverage is much used by the Portuguese settlers, and is made by adding water to the pulp, which lies between the skin and the fruit. The assai species is also of great use to builders. The outer part of the stem is tough and hard. Split into narrow planks, it makes excellent material for walls and flooring.

Arthur was versed in botany. He well knew the value of palms in tropical countries, and this knowledge was soon to prove of much importance to the whole party. While at school in New York he studied botany because his teacher desired him to do so. He had felt no particular interest in the study, but he had been told that whatever he might attain—no matter how irrelevant to his ordinary pursuits it might seem—would in all probability be of some use to him in the future. “Knowledge is power,” the teacher said, and Arthur Erle, lost in a distant forest, was

about to prove the truth of an aphorism which he had last heard uttered on a winter's day, at home.

Arthur was deeply engaged in mentally summing up the various uses to which the assai palm could be put, when a rustling movement among the dead leaves behind him attracted his attention. He turned around hastily and stood rooted to the ground in horror. For an instant he could neither cry out nor move.

Not three feet from him, with a portion of its body twined around the lowest branch of a stunted tree, and the long length of its tail moving to and fro on the ground, was a monster amphibious snake—an anaconda.

Its hideous head was extended toward Arthur—almost on a level with his own. Its eyes were fixed on the boy, and its forked tongue played backward and forward as if to make ready to spring. Its body was very broad in the middle, tapering at both ends, and covered with blotches of black on a dirty yellow ground. Arthur, knowing its terrible power of crushing the largest object in its muscular folds, felt that he was doomed.

Like flashes of lightning, thought after thought crossed his mind. He saw at once that it would be useless to flee. The reptile was too near, and too rapid in its movements. His next idea was to climb the assai, but the stem was too smooth. A glance told him that ; besides, could not the serpent follow him? The slightest movement on his part might hasten the spring of the serpent and precipitate his fate.

The stupefaction of terror which had paralyzed Arthur gave way. Uttering no word, yet with his whole soul praying for help, he made several rapid steps backward. It was too late.

The head of the serpent darted forward. The branch quivered violently, and broke beneath the immense weight. In half a second more the loathsome coils of the anaconda were wound round Arthur Erle.

Closer and closer pinioning his arms, compressing his chest until the act of breathing seemed torture, the huge monster coiled around him.

“Help!” cried Arthur in agony. “Help! Help!”

Mocking echoes cast the word back to him.

The swaying tongue, and glittering eyes of the

anaconda swung above him, with the huge jaws distended.

"Help! Help!" Arthur's voice rose to a piercing shriek.

Again the echoes cast the sound back tauntingly.

His breath came in thick, short gasps. His struggles grew weaker. His head drooped.

"Courage, young senhor—courage!" cried a voice that Arthur knew.

Luco suddenly appeared from behind the dense mass of leaves that hung from a giant king-tree. He held an upraised axe in his hand. He approached the captive boy quickly, and dealt the anaconda a blow with the weapon. The only effect of the blow was to divert the rage of the serpent from Arthur to Luco. Luco adroitly jumped aside, and, using both his hands to wield the axe with more force, buried the head of the axe between the distended jaws of the serpent. Instantly, he drew the machete or sword-like knife from his belt, and followed his first blow by a dozen others. The rage of the anaconda was fearful to witness. Leaving Arthur, it threw its huge bulk toward Luco; but its anger

was aimless, for the negro's well-directed blows had blinded it.

Luco was proficient in the use of his machete, and in a few minutes the anaconda lay writhing in its dying throes.

Arthur, pale and faint, was leaning against a tree. Luco brought some water to him in his rimless hat.

"Next to God, Luco," said Arthur, solemnly, "I owe my life to you."

Luco grinned, and said in Portuguese: "I did not want the anaconda to eat up young senhor."

Arthur looked at the hideous form of the monster and shuddered. The anaconda was not a remarkably large specimen of its species, and yet, as it lay stretched in death, it measured at least thirty feet in length.

"How did you happen to reach this spot first"—

"Young senhor," interrupted Luco, excitedly, "see! look over at the massaranduba! Something is the matter! They are calling aloud."

They—the boys—certainly were calling aloud. Their voices, too, bespoke terror, if not positive pain.

Arthur and Luco, leaving the body of the anaconda, started in direction of the boys' resting-place.

When they reached the verge of the brook, directly opposite the massaranduba, a sight met their view that made Luco's eyes start from their sockets. As yet Arthur did not understand the full extent of the peril that menaced his companions.

XI

CATCHING FISH WITHOUT A HOOK.

REACHING the spot immediately opposite the massaranduba, Arthur and Luco discovered that the sounds did not proceed from the boys.

Well might Luco and Arthur look in helpless dismay across the expanse of water that separated them from their companions. By some accident the branch which had served as a bridge had fallen into the stream and been carried away by the current. The boys were still asleep among the roots—a fact which was made evident by the sound of Tom's snoring, for Tom, though he would never admit it, did snore.

The space around the massaranduba had suddenly become white. It was covered by millions of white ants. The insects were moving in solid columns toward the massaranduba.

“If the young senhors do not awaken they are lost!” cried Luco. “The massaranduba is surrounded by ant-hills, and the ants will destroy the young senhors.”

"I do not understand that the danger is so great," said Arthur. "Surely three boys need not fear any number of ants."

"Ah! You know nothing about it, young master. The ants are as numberless as the leaves of the forest. They will crawl over the bodies of the young senhors. They will strip the flesh from their bones."

"George! George!" cried out Arthur. "Awake! Can we not help them?"

"There is no bridge," said Luco. "If they cannot swim they cannot escape."

Wild with apprehension, Arthur looked around for another branch to supply the place of the lost bridge. There was nothing of the kind within reach, and no time to be lost in searching other parts of the forest.

"George cannot swim!" cried Arthur. "Oh! save him, Luco."

"Not swim!" said Luco, speaking as usual in Portuguese. "Not swim! Why?"

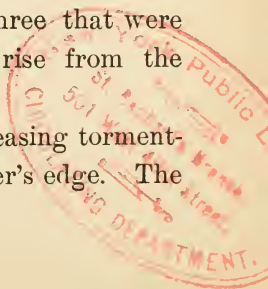
Luco had learned to swim almost as soon as he had learned to walk. He looked incredulously at Arthur. "He has arms and legs. He can walk. Why can he not swim?"

"Because he never learned. Luco! Luco! save him. The ants are crawling into the roots!"

Arthur wildly called his brother's name and covered his face with his hands. His late struggle with the anaconda had unnerved him. He lost his presence of mind completely. Luco shouted with all the strength of his lungs. The noise he made would have awakened even the Seven Sleepers.

But his shouts were rendered unnecessary by the ants themselves. Myriads of them had already entered the roots of the cow-tree, and the boys were awakened by the pain of their poisonous bite. George, feeling a sharp, stinging pain about his feet and ankles, aroused first, to find himself covered with hideous insects. He tried to brush them away with his hands, but they clung to his fingers and tenaciously closed their tiny jaws in his wrists. Tom and Gerald sprang to their feet and endeavored to trample upon the invading hosts; but for every three that were crushed, a thousand seemed to rise from the earth.

Unable to get rid of their increasing tormentors, the three boys ran to the water's edge. The



bridge was gone, and they hesitated. The persevering insects took advantage of their indecision to make further encroachments.

“We’ll have to jump into the water and swim across,” said Tom.

“One, two, three!” counted Gerald, preparing to jump.

“I can’t swim,” said George.

“That’s a pity,” said Tom, “but you must get out of this all the same. The distance is short. Put your arms around my neck. That’s right. Take a strong grip. Now!”

Tom, George, and Gerald sprang into the water at the same moment. The lake, or, rather, pond, that surrounded the cow-tree was not wide but deep. In a short time Gerald, with dripping clothes, stood beside Arthur and Luco. Tom, encumbered by George, was somewhat longer in reaching dry land. He was helped ashore by the others, looking as Gerald said, forgetting his own plight, like a drowned rat.

The rapid passage of the boys through the water had relieved them of their insect pests. A few still remained, but they were soon despatched, and the white ants were left in undisputed pos-

session of the cow-tree. Having selected a spot, first making sure that there were no ant-hills in the vicinity, in an open part of the forest, the boys removed their outer garments and sat down to dry.

Arthur related his adventure with the anaconda, and when he had finished, the boys gave three cheers for Luco, who grinned from ear to ear at this mark of admiration, and turned a somersault by way of expressing his feelings. Arthur asked him how he had managed to elude Captain Slammer.

“Slammer not know the forest. Luco run faster and lose him.”

This was the whole affair in a nut-shell. Luco had run through all the thickets in his way. He was lighter and more agile than his pursuers. He could climb like a monkey, and several times when the sailors were engaged in searching for him on the ground, he had swung himself from limb to limb above their heads. Slammer and the sailors gnashed their teeth with rage, and Luco chuckled from his airy perch among the leaves, and enjoyed their discomfiture. Having led them a long distance into the forest, he be-

gan cautiously to retrace his steps, leaving them in a state of indescribable bewilderment and baffled rage.

"I am hungry as—as—I ever have been—and that means as hungry as a famished lion, bear and wolf rolled into one," said Gerald, ruefully squeezing the water from his hair.

"You're always in a state of hunger, I'm thinking," retorted Tom, who was beginning to recover his spirits; "but I sympathize with you just at present."

"I could eat a beefsteak," said Tom.

"I could eat anything," said Gerald.

"I can promise you some palm-fruit, nuts, bananas"—began Arthur.

"They're only fit for children," said Gerald.

"There's fish in yonder pond. I saw several last night," said George.

Arthur shivered at the thought which the mention of the pond suggested to him—the thought of those millions of crawling ants.

"If we had a line, the fish might be of some use," said Tom, thoughtfully. "Perhaps Luco can suggest something. Will you speak to him, Arthur?"

Arthur repeated the conversation as well as he could in Portuguese.

Luco shook his head violently, and showed his snowy teeth to an extent that surprised even Gerald, who was used to exhibitions.

"You shall have fish, young masters—fish in plenty," he said.

He examined the vines that hung to the various trees around him. At last he stopped and tore down several yards of a snake-like liana called Timbo. The boys watched him curiously. Having mashed the liana between two heavy branches, he beckoned to them to follow him to the pond. They obeyed. The white ants were still swarming around the massaranduba, but their number had lessened. They had probably retired to their nests underground. Just now, the boys were too greatly interested in Luco's proceeding to mind the movements of their late enemies. Luco threw the mashed liana into the gently moving water of the lakelet. In a short time the water became discolored with the milky poison of the plant.

"Wait," said Luco.

The boys waited. In about half an hour a

number of fishes rose to the surface, floating on their sides. The poison of the timbo had suffocated them. Luco easily grasped those that floated near the bank.

“See, senhor!” he exclaimed, triumphantly.

“But they are poisoned!” said Tom.

“No,” Luco said, “they are good to eat,—only their breath is stopped!”

This was a sufficient explanation. In a short time the boys had gathered a supply of fuel. A light was struck by means of the steel blade of a penknife, a piece of flint and a handful of dry leaves. The fire blazed merrily and the boys breakfasted well, for Luco always carried a little box of salt in his bag. They were not afraid now that Slammer might see their fire, as they had been the night before, for, according to Luco’s account, he and his men were too far away.

XII.

FOREST SOUNDS.

A LONG drawn-out sound something between a groan and a shriek suddenly awoke the echoes of the forest and disturbed the boys. A dead silence succeeded.

“Hark!” said Tom, as Gerald opened his mouth to speak.

“Luco and I heard that noise a short time ago,” said Arthur. “We imagined that it was you. It caused us to hasten to the brook.”

“Faith, you gave us credit for sweet voices,” said Gerald, coolly. “Some more fish, if you please, Luco. Let’s stick to the business on hand.”

Tom, Arthur and George started from their reclining position. The noise was again heard, apparently more distant.

Luco had thrown himself face downward on the ground. A fourth time the wild shriek resounded through the solitude. After this the boys listened in vain for it. Slowly shivering

from head to foot, and with an expression of abject terror on his face, Luco regained an upright position.

“It is the Carupira!”

“The what?” demanded Tom.

“The Carupira—the wild man of the woods, senhor.”

“Make him explain, if you can, Arthur,” said Tom, in perplexity. “What does he mean?”

A short dialogue in Portuguese between Arthur and Luco took place.

“The Carupira is horrible, senhor,” said Luco, his teeth chattering so violently that he could not utter the words. “The Carupira is terrible!”

“But who is the Carupira?”

“The spirit of the forest, young senhor. He seeks his victims in the woods, which he never leaves. He has a bright, red face, his body is covered with long hair, and his feet are cloven.”

“You have seen him?”

“No, young senhor, but I have heard him. He lives in the trees.”

Arthur shuddered, in spite of his disbelief in this story. Looking around him, he deemed it

not impossible that some strange creature such as Luco described might dwell in the dark recesses of the forest.

“Nonsense, Luco!” he said, trying to laugh. “This Carupira exists only in your imagination. It is, perhaps, a large monkey.”

Luco, unconvinced, shook his head, and while Arthur translated the above conversation for the benefit of the others, he employed himself in plaiting pieces of palm-leaf into the form of a ring. Having completed this to his satisfaction, he hung it on the branch of a tree.

“The Carupira cannot harm us now,” he said. “I have made a charm to ward away the evil spirit.” He pointed to the ring of plaited palm-leaf.

“I thought you had more sense, Luco, than to credit that a ring of leaves made by our hands could have any effect in driving away an evil spirit,” said Arthur, gravely. “Don’t you know that our religion forbids us to believe in omens or charms.”

Luco hung his head and made no reply. Though Luco’s intercourse with Arthur had been very brief, yet he had learned to respect him,

and now he stole up to the branch and threw his palm-leaf charm away.

“Let us drop the subject of the Carupira for the present,” suggested Tom, “and proceed to consider the question, ‘What shall we do next?’”

“Get back to the river as quickly as we can,” said Gerald.

“Easier said than done. I think that we had better divide into two parties, and make an attempt to explore. We may find a path leading to Para.”

“And we may lose each other entirely,” put in Gerald.

“No danger of that, if we only venture a certain distance, within the sound of each other’s voices, and then return to compare notes. What do you think of it?”

Tom’s suggestion was unanimously adopted. Arthur and Luco started in one direction, while Tom and George took the other. As they proceeded, Gerald and Luco kept up a dialogue of hideous shouts. In this Luco proved himself master, for he could imitate the cries of all the forest animals, while Gerald had only the sounds of the farmyard at his command.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, through meshes of twisted sipos and snaky lianas, over rotten tree-trunks that bridged water-sodden ground, amid twisted masses of fern and luxuriant vegetation ; but no path leading to the city.

“Perhaps the others have found the path,” said George. “Had we not better retrace our steps.”

“All right.” And Gerald gave a lung-splitting howl as a signal to the others. Luco’s reply was faint and distant.

The boys had hardly retraced their steps, a hundred yards of their course, when a faint groan sounded near them.

“Luco’s Carupira !” exclaimed George.

“Hush !” commanded Tom.

The groan was repeated more faintly. Apparently it came from the tangled mass of vines which surrounded the base of slim assai. The vines seemed as if they had been thrown there to cover some object beneath.

“It sounds like a human voice—the voice of a man in distress.”

Thus speaking, Tom made a movement toward the spot from which the groan proceeded.

“Stop!” cried George, whom the events of the morning had made nervous, catching at Tom’s sleeve. “Some terrible animal may be hidden under these vines.”

Tom caught the infection of George’s nervousness, and hesitated.

“It’s a man’s voice!” cried Gerald.

“It may be the Carúpira!”

“Bother the Carupira! I’m going to see, anyhow.”

Before either of the others could interfere, Gerald had begun to push the vines aside.

“It’s a man!” he cried. “I’ve uncovered his boots.”

Sure enough a pair of boots were visible among the leaves and stems. Tom and George now lent their assistance. In a few minutes they had brought to view the prostrate body of a man. George started in terror and amazement. Tom stood, with his hands full of creepers, and silently stared at this new discovery. It seemed to strike him dumb with wonder.

“If it isn’t Captain Slammer!” cried Gerald.

It was Captain Slammer.

XIII.

“WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH HIM?”

IN the meantime, Arthur and Luco continued in the opposite direction. Luco led the way, with intuitive knowledge, guiding his companions to those parts of the ground least encumbered by fallen trees and tangled vines. They did not speak for some time. Luco only occasionally opened his mouth to answer Gerald's signals.

“Luco,” suddenly exclaimed Arthur, “are you *sure* that the poisoned fish will not hurt us? I was so remarkably hungry that I did not think much about it before eating them.”

Luco paused and deliberated before answering.

“We are probably not poisoned then,” said Luco, gravely. “The juice of liana killed the fishes, but it cannot injure you. Men are different from big fishes, and boys are different from little ones.”

Arthur assented to those profound observations, and Luco chuckled, repeating it several times, as if he regarded it as a good joke. Arthur's at-

tention was called from the subject of the fish by a procession of animated leaves which was crossing the open glade in front of them. The procession moved in strict order. It was composed of immense numbers of orange-leaves slowly wending their way toward some mounds of earth of a different color from the surrounding soil. Arthur stood still in astonishment.

"This is most singular," he said. "Walking leaves! I never saw anything like it."

Arthur's amazement seemed to strike Luco as another good joke. He bent nearly double with laughter.

"Really, Luco," said Arthur, in an injured tone, "to see leaves walking along in that style is rather surprising."

"White folks are very wise," said Luco, still grinning, "but they do not know everything. Don't you know, young senhor, that the leaves are carried away by the Sauba ants? It is not the leaves that walk; it is the ants."

Arthur approached nearer to the procession. The ants were certainly "wearing the green" on a large scale. Each tiny individual carried its segment of leaf, with an edge secured in its man-

dibles. Having left this burden on the hillock, another troop of ants covered the leaves with a layer of granules of earth brought from underground. Arthur turned to see from where the leaves had been taken. He discovered that they had almost stripped a young orange-tree of its leaves. He watched their system of operations. They were mounting the tree in crowds. Each one placed itself on the surface of a leaf, and with its sharp jaws cut a half-circular piece, which it carried to the colony. “As all take the same road to their colony,” says an eminent naturalist, “the path they follow becomes in a short time smooth and bare, looking like an impression of a car-wheel through the herbage.”

“What name do you give the ants?”

“I have heard my mother call them the Saubas.”

“The Saubas,” said Arthur, thoughtfully. “Oh! yes; I remember now. The name naturalists give them is *Aecadoma cephalotus*. They use the leaves to thatch the entrances to their underground nests, and to hinder the rain from penetrating into their abodes.”

“They are pests,” said Luco. “In some parts

of our country they are so numerous that planters find it difficult to raise coffee or oranges, as the Saubas destroy the young plants. Their nests in the earth run great distances, sometimes farther than sixty yards."

"They prefer the leaves of cultivated trees; don't they, Luco?"

"Yes. It is that which makes them so destructive. I have heard it said that they will not touch a wild forest tree, if they can get a foreign tree."

"A foreign tree?"

"A tree that has been brought into the country, senhor—a tree that does not grow wild."

"I have read that the orange does not grow wild here—that it has been transplanted into Brazil."

"I think that you have read aright, senhor."

"Now, Luco, if the orange grows here, somebody must have planted it."

"Yes, senhor."

"The orange does not grow here; therefore"—

"Exactly. Hurrah! Luco, we cannot be so far from human habitations, after all. The seeds

of the orange-trees must have been planted by the hand of man.”

“Unless the birds carried them,” suggested the negro, grinning.

“Do you really think that, Luco?” Arthur asked, anxiously.

“I know better, young senhor, for I have made a discovery. Last night—but hark!”

Gerald’s voice was plainly heard.

“He is giving the signal to return. Let us go at once. Hurry up, Luco. Let us pray that they have found a path.”

They set off at a rapid pace to join their companions. Running over sticks and stones, they could not waste breath in words, so that Luco did not get a chance to tell what he discovered.

The sight of the group at the foot of the palm amazed them even more than the leaf-carrying ants had amazed Arthur.

Tom was kneeling among the tangled creepers supporting the head of Captain Slammer, while Arthur was engaged in wiping the captain’s pale face with a handkerchief, which from time to time he dipped in a gourd of water held by Gerald.

Captain Slammer's forehead was disfigured by a gaping wound, from which the blood was flowing. His eyes were closed. He was apparently lifeless.

"O, Arthur! I am glad you've come," said George, looking up from his work. "We don't know what to do."

"I am not certain that we ought to do anything," said Gerald, "except to let him lie here. Old Slammer doesn't deserve good at our hands."

"For shame, Gerald!" cried George.

"I didn't think that you couldn't forgive an enemy, Gerald Desmond," said Tom, hotly.

"I don't care what you thought," retorted Gerald. "What do *you* think, Luco?"

"Don't kick a man when he's down," said Luco, using one of the English phrases he had caught up.

This settled the question. Gerald held the gourd in silence, and in his heart tried to think charitably of Slammer. He struggled hard with himself.

"Well, is the man to bleed to death or not?" asked Tom. "He has already fainted from loss

of blood. What shall we do, Arthur? I am not much of a doctor.”

“Nor am I.”

“Think of something. We can’t let the man die before our eyes.”

Arthur paused. The others watched him anxiously. He could remember nothing of all he had learned applicable to the present situation. He gazed aimlessly around him as if seeking inspiration. His eye rested on some ants’ nests. These nests were of a brownish-colored, cotton-like substance. They were the nests of a species of green ant, the materials having been collected from a very beautiful shrub.

“That is the very thing!” exclaimed Arthur. “I have often read of it!” In a few minutes’ time he had secured a handful of this down, which he applied to Slammer’s wound.

“It will stop the bleeding immediately.”

“It is very good,” said Luco. “The Indians call it the ‘touchwood of ants.’”

The other three were somewhat incredulous at first; but the result justified the confidence of Arthur and Luco in the blood-stanching property

of the ants' nest. The blood ceased to flow from Slammer's wound.

Arthur took the nerveless wrist, and felt his pulse.

"He is in a very bad state," he asserted, hesitatingly.

Gerald could not restrain a laugh notwithstanding the seriousness of the occasion.

"Write a prescription, doctor."

"The question is, what shall we do with Slammer?"

"Yes; what shall we do with him?" echoed Tom.

XIV.

THE HUT.

No one seemed able to answer the question.

"We cannot remain here. We must find a way out of this wilderness," said Arthur; "and yet we cannot desert Slammer. What can we do?"

Luco screwed up his mouth and rolled his eyes with what he conceived to be an air of wisdom.

"Luco looks like a black owl," said Gerald. "Ask him what he means, Arthur." Arthur put the question.

"I told you that I had discovered something, senhor."

"Yes, Luco, but we were interrupted. What was it?"

"A house."

"A house? Are you in earnest?"

"A house of palms, senhor. I slept in it part of last night after I had put Slammer and the sailors on the wrong track. The house is not far

away. You can come with me and see for yourself."

"Did you see anybody in this house, Luco?"

"Nobody, senhor."

"The owners were probably absent. The orange-trees were planted by the hand of man, and not the birds, as you suggested. The people who live in that house may be able to guide us back to Para."

"I say," broke in Gerald, "is that confabulation in bad Portuguese ever going to come to an end?"

"Luco has found a house."

This announcement called forth a shower of questions.

"Where? What is it like? Anybody in it?"

Luco pointed to the north and said, "Come."

"You had better go forward, Arthur, and reconnoitre," said Tom, "while we devise some means of carrying Slammer."

Luco and Arthur started for the house. A half-hour's walk brought them to a small clearing in the forest. In the centre of this clearing they found a hut, constructed of palm-wood and thatched with the huge leaves of the bussu palm.

From the outside the hut seemed like a large mound covered by a luxuriant growth of vegetation. Luco pushed aside the curtain of vines that concealed the doorway, and, followed by his companion, entered a moderate-sized room. The interior was in darkness, and the sudden change from the light without, prevented the boys from seeing anything for a time. Luco groped his way to a place in the wall where some faint gleams of light were showing themselves. A few vigorous pushes from Luco's fists soon cleared the aperture from the encumbered sipsos, and a flood of sunlight burst in with a bound. The tall trees that grew in other parts of the forest were not visible around the hut, but the charred stumps barely arising above the new growth of plant-life, told that they had once stood there, and spread the same solemn gloom that now lay like a pall over the rest of the forest.

No human being was in the hut. A hammock, formed of strong knotted roots, hung in one corner. A bright axe lay among the dried palm-leaves that carpeted the floor. A kettle, a frying-pan, and several gourds were hung above the

fire-blackened stove which had evidently served as a hearth.

The fact of the vines having so completely covered the entrance proved that the hut had not been recently visited by its owner.

"The hut has been deserted," was Arthur's conclusion.

Luco was bending over some object just outside the doorway.

"The owner of the hut is a white man. Come here, young *senhor*."

Arthur obeyed. Luco, on hands and knees, was examining a faint foot-mark on the ground. "It is the mark of a white man's foot." Arthur's sense of sight less well-trained than Luco's was unable to make that out, but he picked up a shirt-button near the foot-mark. This convinced him that the owner of the hut was not an uncivilized being.

"We will go back to tell the boys. Help me to take down this hammock, Luco. It is the very thing in which to carry *Slammer*."

The boys unstrung the hammock from its supports. Arthur began to whistle for the first time in many days.

“Do you know, Luco, I don’t think it would be such a very bad thing to live in the forest always, if one could have a well-furnished house.”

“And if there were no anacondas, nor white ants, nor jaguars, nor pumas, nor savage Indians, and if one’s father were here,” said Luco, dolefully.

“Poor Luco! It is hard to be separated from your father, and all for the sake of my brother and me; but we’ll never forget it, Luco. We will do our best to repay you, some day. Slammer is responsible for all this trouble, and yet I pity him, now.”

“If his head were well I would like to”—Luco did not finish the sentence, but brandished his fists in the air toward the hammock, which for the time represented Slammer.

“It is growing late. We must make hay while the sun shines.”

They shouldered the hammock, and at a rapid pace proceeded to rejoin their companions. Tom had not been able to devise any means of conveying the wounded man to the hut.

“That’s the very thing we want,” he cried, catching sight of Arthur and hammock; “but you

stayed away so long that we began to fear that you had fallen into the hands, or rather the mouths, of a tribe of cannibals."

"What have you found?" demanded Gerald and George in a breath. Arthur satisfied their curiosity as well as he could.

"A footprint in the sand!" exclaimed George. "Only that and nothing more. It reminds me of Robinson Crusoe. Have you ever read that?"

"No," said Gerald, with an air of superiority. "I never read anything. It is a waste of time."

The boys laughed. "Never mind, we'll not discuss that," said George. "I'll tell you the outline of the story as we go along."

Captain Slammer opened his eyes and groaned, as they gently lifted him into the hammock. He saw Arthur bending over him, and he turned away with a shudder. Slowly and carefully, conversing in low tones for fear of disturbing the wounded man, the boys carried their fallen enemy toward the hut. George and Gerald, at the foot of the hammock, soon became deeply interested in the story of Robinson Crusoe, with variations that would have doubtless amazed

Defoe. As usual, Luco led the way, while, at their post—the head of the hammock—Tom and Arthur talked in grave whispers.

“We are surrounded by many dangers, seen and unseen,” said Tom.

“I know that well; but it is the same everywhere.”

“Yes; but, Arthur, I had a feeling that the devil has more power here in this wilderness. Everything is so awful—so mysterious and gloomy. May be even now we are going into some horrible trap. Who inflicted this murderous wound on Slammer?”

“He may have angered one of the sailors”—

“No; the sailors, bad as they are, would not have dared to do it. I feel sure of that.”

“Who did it, then?”

“The monster who made the blood-curdling sounds we heard—the spirit of the woods—the Carupira!”

Arthur silently watched the speaker for a moment.

“I tell you, Tom,” he said at last, “that you’re worth your weight in gold, in times of real danger, but when there’s nothing to fear, you’re as

nervous as an old woman. I call that plan talk."

"And sure it is. I like you all the better for it; but you'll find out that it was the Carupira that wounded Slammer."

Arthur shook his head and made no answer.

XV.

AT NIGHT.

IT was late in the afternoon when the boys reached the hut, and laid their burden on the palm-leaf strewn floor. Captain Slammer had fallen asleep, and they had great difficulty in stringing the hammock in its place without disturbing him ; at last, however, they succeeded.

This arrangement completed, the boys found time to look around them and also to discover that there were no provisions in store. Gerald looked into the frying-pan and sighed.

"What's the matter?" said George, who was engaged in piling up palm-leaves for beds. Gerald heaved a sigh.

"Don't ask me," he said ; "I'm thinking of the departed"—

"Beefsteaks," interrupted George.

"Beefsteaks!" exclaimed Gerald, sorrowfully. "Who thinks of beefsteaks in a forest like this? It suddenly struck me that this frying-pan, empty

as it now is—may have once contained—ham and eggs! Henceforth it is sacred in my eyes.”

Gerald looked round solemnly, and smacked his lips.

“Life is but an empty dream,” he continued, “and sure it will continue to be so if Luco doesn’t find us something to eat.”

“Oranges and Brazil nuts,” began Arthur.

“By no manner of means,” exclaimed Gerald. “We can’t fry them, and I’m determined to fry something.”

“Fish,” said Arthur.

“For the want of better,” said Gerald. “Luco, get us some fish.”

Luco ran off toward the pond, having first secured some lengths of the liana he had before used to suffocate the fish.

Tom, George and Arthur worked hard to improve the interior of the hut by removing the debris that had collected there, while Gerald acted as overseer.

Luco entered with his load of fish, and offered his services as cook; but Gerald insisted on acting in that capacity. He had already made a fire, and a savory odor was in a short time wafted

from the frying-pan ; but fish after fish became burnt under his unskillful management. The boys grew impatient and remonstrated.

“The contrary spalpeens !” muttered the self-appointed cook, whose face was the color of a boiled lobster. “They turn black because I’m white—just to spite me.”

“Let Luco try,” said Tom. “Perhaps the contrary creatures may turn brown just to spite him.”

Gerald surrendered the frying-pan to the negro. In a short time a pyramid of delicately-browned fish was placed before the boys on a large palm-leaf. George gracefully handed around pointed sticks to serve as forks, and the repast began.

“We are forgetting our patient,” said Arthur.

“He is sound asleep, and it is better to allow him to remain so.”

“You’re right, George,” muttered Gerald. “Slammer is best when he’s asleep. He can do no harm.”

“There’s something very mysterious about that wound of his,” said Tom.

“Oh ! be cheerful,” said Gerald. “Could you

do some more fish, Luco? Faith, you are the broth of a boy! Let's talk of something pleasanter than Slammer's wounds. Who cares how he got it? He deserves it, anyhow."

"Poor fellow!" said Arthur. "By the way, Tom, if we had a good rifle among us our perils would be considerably lessened, and we would have the means of varying our food, in case we should be compelled to remain in the forest any length of time."

"The same thought occurred to me." Luco had been listening attentively. He could very often catch the leading idea of a conversation.

"Senhors," he said, "I will make gravatana. I will shoot birds, monkeys, tamandua (ant-eaters), pacas, cutias—what you will."

"A gravatana!" exclaimed Tom. "What is that?"

"I have read of it," said Arthur. "It is a blow-gun. It is formed by the hollow stems of palms, and from it the Indians blow poisoned arrows."

"I will show you," said Luco.

It was not yet dark. Luco left the hut. ~~After~~ a time he reëntered, carrying two hollow

palm-stems of different degrees of thickness. These stems were nearly ten feet in length. Having assured himself that the larger tube was perfectly hollow, Luco fitted the smaller one tightly onto it. He used two stems, in order that the gravatana might be straight—that any bend in the small stem might be corrected by the larger, and vice versa. He fastened a wooden mouthpiece to the instrument, glued on a long fish-bone as a “sight,” and declared his instrument finished. Luco then proceeded to make some long arrows from the spines of the patawa palm.

“To-morrow,” said Luco, “I will make the poison, and show you how to use the gravatana.”

Night fell. The boys built a huge fire outside the hut, and the space for some distance around was made as light as day. Tom and George made soft cushions of leaves, and the boys sat in the cheering light that flickered about them, and prevented the solemn darkness from encroaching upon them.

“I say, Arthur, what kind of animals are those cutias and pacas that Luco mentioned?” Gerald asked.

“The cutias and pacas are rodents—that is,

gnawing, fruit-eating animals. The paca is not quite as large as the hog, nor is it as small as a hare. It is between the two in size. It is reddish, spotted with white, and almost tailless. The cutia is not as large as the paca, and"—

"Cut it short," said Gerald, "and come to the point. Are they good to eat?"

"Very good. Travellers speak well of roasted paca."

"We'll soon be able to test their merits if Luco's blow-guns turn out well."

"I wish we were out of this!" sighed Tom. "I wonder what father, mother and Mary are doing now. Thinking of us—praying for us—crying for us?"

"Keep up your spirits, Tom," said Gerald, hopefully. "We'll meet them again soon."

"When that comes to pass—I fervently pray it may be soon—I shall be happy."

"You think so, Tom," said Arthur, "but when that comes to pass, you'll long for something to make you happy."

"Sure, you're wrong there! But, if I may ask the question, what would make you happy, if you were safe at home?"

"Plenty of books," answered Arthur, "and plenty of time for studying them. And if you were at home, Tom, you would certainly wish for something more."

Tom paused awhile.

"Yes, I believe I would. Plenty of money would make me happy."

"And you, Gerald?"

"Plenty of fun, to do as I please, and oceans of ham and eggs."

"Exalted aims! And you, Luco?" Arthur said, explaining the question.

"With nothing to do, senhor," said Luco, grinning, "I would be happy as the day is long."

"And you, George?"

"I think," said George, gazing dreamily into the fire, "that if I were very good, so very good that I would like everybody and everybody would like me, I'd be perfectly happy."

"Sure, then, who would you quarrel with?"

George looked at Gerald in surprise. "I would not care to quarrel."

"A dull time you'd have of it, faith! And if everybody was like you the world would spoil for want of a beatin'."

“Nonsense, Gerald!” cried Tom. “George is the only sensible one of us. Arthur would die of sheer laziness if his wish were granted; you would probably break your neck in pursuit of fun or kill yourself with gluttony, and I’m afraid much money would make me selfish.”

“You needn’t be afraid of that,” said Gerald, winking at Arthur. “That would be carrying coals to Newcastle.”

Tom laughed good-humoredly at this fraternal thrust.

A slight moan coming from the hammock announced that Captain Slammer was awake. George approached him with a gourd of cold water. The captain drank eagerly. His attendant then roasted some bananas.

“Thank you,” said Slammer, merely tasting the refreshment. “Forgive me, George, and ask your brother to forgive me. I am dying, I fear.”

“That’s all right,” said George, nervously. He wanted to say something consoling, but he could not seize the proper words. “We have no malice; you’ll not die yet awhile, captain.”

“I am doomed,” whispered Slammer, faintly, as the firelight gleamed on his pale face. “I am

doomed. Listen. It is not the effect of this wound alone that I fear. It might not prove fatal, had it been given me by a human being. But it was not a man that struck me; it was a monster—a demon.”

“A feverish dream.”

The captain shook his head. “No. An evil spirit has been let loose on earth to punish me for my sins.”

“It’s about bedtime, boys!” Gerald’s voice was heard saying, and the boys entered the hut.

George took the rosary of black beads from his neck, and knelt near the hammock. The others reverently followed his example. Captain Slammer watched the group, and a new expression, as of light breaking on his soul, shone on his rugged face. A shadow darkened the hut. Slammer’s expression changed to one of intense fear.

“Save me! save me!” he shrieked. “It is there! there!”

The eyes of the startled boys sought the door. In the crimson glare of the firelight stood a tall, dark figure, apparently half-tiger, half-man. Its

fiery eyes were fixed upon them. It darted forward and tore the rosary from George's hands.

"The Carupira! The Carupira!" cried Luco, falling prostrate on the floor.

XVI.

THE MAN OF THE WOODS.

THE glare of the firelight died away, and for an instant dense darkness reigned in the hut. The fire blazed up again, but the terrible figure, half-tiger, half-man, had disappeared.

For a time none of the boys spoke. The crackling of the fire and the groans of Luco, who lay upon the floor, with his face downward, alone broke the silence.

“Don’t kill me, good Carupira!” cried the negro, as soon as he regained his power of speech. “I haven’t done anything wrong. If you want anybody, take the white man; take Slammer!”

Without daring to look, Luco poured forth entreaties, expostulations and prayers in succession.

“Get up, Luco,” said Arthur’s voice, slightly tremulous. “It is gone!”

Luco hesitated. “Are you in earnest, young senhor?”

“Yes. Get up.”

Luco rose to his feet, shuddered, and looked around cautiously.

"I don't believe there has been anything here at all," said Gerald, throwing himself down among the palm-leaves. "We dreamed it. It was all imagination."

"Would that it were," cried Arthur.

"I should be almost inclined to think so myself," said George, "if my rosary had not disappeared with it."

"You may have dropped the rosary among the leaves," said Tom.

"No. The rosary was torn from my hands."

"This is foolish talk," said Arthur. "We saw this figure. There is no doubt of that, nor is there a reasonable doubt that it grasped George's rosary."

"It took George's rosary," said Gerald, "therefore it is not the Carupira, for an evil spirit wouldn't touch a blessed rosary, much less run away with it."

"It's an unprofitable subject for talk," interrupted Tom. "Go to sleep, all of you. I intend to sit near the fire all night and watch. If anything alarming happens, I'll awaken you."

Argument was wasted on Tom. He would watch, and nobody else should watch, he declared, and so the others were compelled to take themselves to their couches of soft leaves.

When you find a boy that cannot eat and sleep, you may mentally order the boy's coffin. A man or woman, oppressed by apprehension or trouble, may be unable to do either of these things, and yet survive; but when a boy cannot eat or sleep under all circumstances, give him up. In spite of all fear that the mysterious visitor might return, our boys, excepting Tom, gradually dropped into the arms of Morpheus—which means that they soon slept as sound as humming-tops.

Before morning dawned, Tom had, in spite of his resolution to keep awake, taken quite a series of naps, which, added together, made a very comfortable night's rest. He was altogether unconscious of this, however, and when Gerald arose and found him dozing he persistently asserted that he had not slept a wink.

Having breakfasted as usual on fish and fruit, the four boys sat down to a consultation, which was broken up as soon as Luco began to make

the poison for the arrows for his gravatana. This most deadly poison is known by various names among which are "ourari," "curari," and "woorali." It is perfectly harmless when swallowed, and is often taken by the Indians as a medicine. It causes certain death, however, if it reaches the blood through a cut, a sore, or an arrow-wound. Some naturalists assert that there is no antidote to this most powerful poison, which causes a death similar to that produced by the bite of a serpent.

Very early in the morning Luco had gone farther into the forest, and procured a supply of the materials for making the poison, some rods of *strychnos toxifera*. Luco had spent a long time in procuring them, as this species of *strychnos* is seldom found in the dark forest.

Luco scraped the bark and inner coating from the rods. He next laid the fibres thus obtained upon a stone, and mashed them well. He now wanted to borrow a frying-pan, but Gerald held out against that. After a short search, an old iron lid was found. Having placed the mashed bark in a funnel made of thick leaves, Luco placed the lid, turned down, under the apex of

the funnel. Water was then thrown upon the bark, and a yellowish liquid dripped slowly into the lid.

“Behold, young senhor, the dreadful urari—the destroyer of men and animals!” exclaimed Luco.

“But he has not finished making it,” said Arthur, translating his words. “I have read of this process before. It must be concentrated by evaporation, and mixed with gum in order to make it adhere to the arrows.”

“It is strange,” said Tom, “that the urari poison has not been introduced into Europe. In war it would be more destructive than gunpowder.”

“Happily for Europe, the urari must be fresh when used. A voyage across the sea would make it useless. By the way, Luco, were you not afraid of the Carupira when you went out this morning?”

“There is no Carupira,” returned Luco, gravely.

“No Carupira!” echoed Arthur in surprise.

“No, senhor—not in this part of the forest. Come, I will show you.”

Luco pointed to the man’s footprint just with-

out the doorway. "Look at it well, senhor, and now look at this—and this—and this."

Numerous fresh prints, evidently made by the same person who had made the first, led away from the hut. Arthur stooped and measured the marks. They were of the same shape and size as the first.

"Well?"

"Well, senhor, our Carupira of last night is a white man, and probably the owner of this hut."

Arthur started. "The man we saw last night may have been a white man, but he looked more like a monster of the woods."

"We need not fear now," said Luco, cheerfully; "my gravatana and I will match any white man."

Arthur repeated this conversation to the boys, who were more disturbed by the thought of a prowling white man than they had been by the fear of the Carupira.

Days passed. Each night one of the boys kept watch. Luco found many opportunities for using his gravatana or blowpipe.

The party feasted sumptuously every day on delicately-flavored birds and small game which

his skill caused to bite the dust. When Luco saw a group of plump birds, he would place an arrow in the tube, and then put the blowpipe to his lips. Holding the long tube tightly with both hands at the lower end—an operation that required great skill—he blew a strong puff of wind into the tube, and the poisonous arrow sped toward its prey. Luco seldom missed his aim. He made gravatanus for the others; but, though they practiced daily with unpoisoned arrows, they had not yet learned to use the instruments.

Life in the woods would not have been unpleasant to the boys had the fear of constant new dangers not oppressed them, and had not Tom and Gerald felt a deep longing and anxiety for the dear ones at Para.

Two slow weeks went by. On Sunday, Arthur read the prayers for mass from the little prayer book that the priest in Ireland had given Mary Desmond, and the boys united themselves in spirit with the millions of pious Christians who, more fortunate than they, were able to attend the Holy Sacrifice in person. In the afternoon they sang the sweet solemn music of the Vesper psalms.

Luco was learning English fast under Arthur's tuition. In the evening the boys told stories around the fire, took turns in singing and reciting poetry, or joined the French class, which Arthur, who knew that language, had established. Slammer's health improved from day to day. He was now able to sit up.

One morning, bright and early, just as the boys were about to start on an exploring expedition into the forest, a shadow darkened the threshold of the hut, and a man entered. The face of this man was covered by a thick growth of beard. His attire consisted of a tunic of jaguar skin. He carried a knotted club in one hand, and from the other hung George's rosary. He glanced around the hut. The boys shrank back. His eyes glared fiercely at Slammer. He uttered a guttural cry, bounded swiftly forward, and tore the hammock from its supports. He raised the club over Slammer's head. In vain the wounded man cried for mercy. The ponderous club was raised in the air. Descending, it would crush the head of the helpless captain.

XVII.

GEORGE'S APPEAL.

IF it descended, the ponderous club would crush the head of the helpless captain to atoms!

But the club did not descend, for George had darted forward, and placed himself between Slammer and his impending doom.

"Out of my way, boy," the man cried, in a thick guttural voice. "Out of my way, boy, or I will crush you."

"None o' that, if you please!" exclaimed Gerald, grasping the man's arm. "If you want to crush him, you've got to crush me first, an' you'll not find that easy."

The man threw Gerald to the other side of the hut with the mere turn of his arm.

"If you are not a monster—a wild beast, spare this man! Heaven has placed him in our care, and we will defend him to the last! You shall not injure him!" In speaking these brave words, Arthur tried hard to overcome the dreadful fear of this madman that oppressed him.

The man glanced at the speaker as if about to turn his rage on him.

"He must be made to understand acts, as words are too weak," said Tom in his usual voice. "There's your knife, Arthur."

Simultaneously the boys drew out the broad bamboo knives made for them by Luco. The man laughed scornfully, and from the folds of his tunic drew a long steel dagger.

"This is a match for ten like yours, I think," he said, brandishing the glittering blade before their faces. "Ay, a match for twenty such as you. Now, Slammer, your time has come! Do you remember me? Thomas Cedric?"

"It's the face of the dead!" groaned Slammer, his features convulsed with horror. "It's the face of the dead! My sin has found me out. Mercy—have mercy!"

"Have mercy!" echoed George, pity overcoming terror. "Would you murder a defenseless man? We will leave this house—we will take him from your sight; only spare his life."

The man dropped the club, and gazed long and earnestly in the boy's face. The wild glare left his eyes. He caught George's hand in his.

"Your voice brings back good thoughts, boy. Who are you? Is this rosary yours?"

"The rosary is mine; my father gave it to me," answered George, somewhat tremulously, as he recognized his rosary of black beads.

"And your father's name?"

"My father's name was George Erle." The man pushed George from him at arm's length, and scrutinized him in silence.

"Ay," he said at last, "you are like him. He was my benefactor, boy. To him I owe all the kindness I ever experienced from a human being. To him I owe a debt which I never can repay; and you, his son, plead for Slammer! It is as if an angel of light were pleading for the devil himself! Look at the wretch! He knows me!"

Slammer had managed to raise himself to a sitting position in the hammock. His cheeks and lips were livid, and his forehead was covered with huge drops of perspiration.

"Look at the wretch!" the man repeated, dropping George's hands, and pointing at the trembling captain of the Swallow. "I could tear him to pieces! He made me what I am! He drove me into the forest to lead the life of a

wild beast! He stole my reason and made me mad! mad!—as I am now!”

Again the club was about to descend on Slammer. Again George interposed. Slammer covered his face and cried for help.

“Away, boys, away!” shrieked the madman. “He deserves death!”

“If he must die,” said George, trying to make himself heard amid the horrible din, “if he must die, at least tell us why he deserves death.”

The man lowered his club, and laughed—a loud, howling laugh such as the boys had sometimes heard sounding in the depths of the forest.

“Tell them, Slammer, what you have done.”

Slammer uttered a wail of agony.

“Speak, or—what have you done to me? You know me well.”

“You are Thomas Cedric. You were once mate on board the Swallow.”

“Right so far. I was Thomas Cedric, of sound mind and body. Now only half of Thomas Cedric remains. His mind is gone—gone—gone.”

The last words were uttered with a sobbing

sigh. Silence reigned for a moment, during which the boys could plainly hear the beating of their hearts.

"Who caused me to be the wreck I am? Tell them, Slammer."

"I don't know—I don't know!" cried Slammer, wildly. "Kill me at once! This torture is worse than death."

"Tell them at once," said the inexorable madman.

"I cannot."

"Very well, Slammer. I will tell the story myself, and you had better pray for repentance while I am telling it, for that is all the time you will have on earth. Sit down, boys," he continued, seating himself on the floor, and placing his club against the wall. "Don't be afraid. This is my house, and you are welcome."

The boys obeyed him, and seated themselves among the palm-leaves, though, as you doubtless surmise, not feeling very much at ease.

"Slammer, remember what I have said. Prepare for death. There shall be no reprieve." He said this sternly, and Slammer knew that he meant it. Now that his face was no longer con-

torted with anger and hate, there was something not unprepossessing about the man, Thomas Cedric, and in spite of the expression in his eyes that spoke plainly of insanity, he seemed an object of pity rather than of fear.

Luco lay cowering in a corner of the hut. He had scarcely dared to open his eyes since the madman had entered. Gerald, quite recovered from the rough usage he had received, was stealthily creeping in the direction of the madman's club. Cedric did not perceive this, but Gerald's slightest motion filled the others with fear lest he should be discovered.

"I will tell you what Slammer has done to me, boys, and I will also tell you, young Erle, what a good man your father is. I was, five years ago, mate aboard the *Swallow*. I did my work well. I never said much; but when Slammer came to me, and asked me to join in one of his wicked plans, I gave my opinion in good round terms. From that time Slammer hated me. One day we were shipping cargo at Para. It was a fair, summer day, I remember—I had just been looking down at the clear ripples in the river, and wondering whether they had ever washed

the roots of that old willow near the creek at home."

Cedric paused awhile, and drew his hand across his forehead.

"Those ripples, sparkling and glittering, roaring, surging, and rising into big waves, have been running in my brain ever since. Slammer gave me some order which I did not understand properly. There was no one besides ourselves on deck, and he struck me. I staggered. He—coward! struck me again, and I, stunned by the blow, fell into the river.

"I would have perished had not your father, George Erle, jumped into the Para, and rescued me. He took me to his lodging house in Para, and tended me with a brother's kindness. Again, I say, I can never repay the debt I owe him. He saved my life twice. Once he snatched me from the river; a second time, from death by brain fever; but the fever completed Slammer's work, and going, left me mad. I broke away from you father's care, and fled to the forest. Here for nearly four years I have roamed the woods, sometimes resting in this hut, which I built with my own hands. Do not fear," he

said, noticing that Luco was edging away from him. "I will not injure you. You cannot make ripples in my brain rise to waves. Slammer alone can do that. For him I reserve my strength."

"I say, I can't stand this," cried Gerald, forgetting prudence. "Why can't you forgive that miserable Slammer? It's my opinion that if you were such a bad-hearted spalpeen when you were on board the Swallow as you are now, you deserved to be thrown into the river. Slammer has done a great deal of harm to George and Arthur, and still they don't raise a fuss about it."

The other boys trembled at this speech.

"For your own sake, be quiet, Gerald. You forget the man's insane," whispered Arthur.

"I must speak or—burst," returned Gerald, as cool and composed as usual.

Cedric took no notice of Gerald's words. He merely stretched out his hand and grasped the club.

"You, Slammer, bear the wound I gave you one night in the forest. I thought it had killed you; but I left my work unfinished. I will complete it now."

He whirled the club around his head and sprang to his feet. He raised the ponderous weapon in his right hand and the long, glittering knife in his left. George clung to him.

"Will no one save me?" yelled Slammer.
"Help! mercy! pardon, O heaven!"

"Arthur, Tom, Luco!" cried George.

Gerald, Arthur and Tom rushed forward. With a sweep of his club Cedric drove them back.

In spite of Cedric's struggles, George, endowed for an instant with preternatural strength, clung to his jaguar skin tunic.

Lurid fire seemed to burn in the madman's eyes. He uttered one of the blood-curdling cries the boys had heard before.

Had Slammer's last hour come?

Nerving himself for a final, desperate appeal, George seized the crucifix that hung from the rosary twined around the man's left wrist.

Holding it up, he spoke in his clear, boyish voice that sounded like the notes of a silver trumpet, saying:

"Remember this!"

XVIII.

TO-MORROW.

THOMAS CEDRIC looked for an instant at the sacred symbol, and then his club struck the floor. An expression that reminded George of light struggling through a cloud crossed his face.

“Think of this—remember this!” repeated George, still holding the crucifix. “You say that you owe my father a debt,” he continued, following up his advantage; “you cannot pay your debt to him, for he is dead. Pay it to us, his sons! Give us this man’s life!”

Cedric gazed uncertainly from the crucifix to George’s face.

“Your father was a good man,” he said, recalling the past. “He tried to raise my thoughts to God. While I lay sick he spoke to me of faith, hope, and charity, but the waves in my brain have risen and swept his words away. Ah! yes, I remember; it was the day before I fled that he gave me the rosary. I thought I

would never part with it, but in my haste I forget it."

"Arthur, come, help me to gain this boon!"

Arthur stepped forward and took his brother's outstretched hand. It was as cold as ice, though George's cheeks were flushed and his eyes unusually bright. Arthur did not know how to address the madman. He feared to speak lest in his nervousness he should say something to provoke a fresh burst of anger.

"We, sons of your benefactor, plead for this man's life!" said George, solemnly.

"I say!" broke in Gerald, with his accustomed recklessness—"I say, Cedric, or whatever your name may be, if you kill Slammer, I'll let the police know it as soon as I get back to Para! Let me alone, Tom, I will speak, if he knocks me to smithereens. Slammer has injured Arthur and George and all of us boys, and yet we don't get insane about"—

Tom had succeeded in smothering Gerald's too fluent speech by covering his mouth with his hands.

Cedric turned away from Gerald with a gesture of contempt.

“Speak again,” he said to George; “your voice brings back to me the good words of your father and calms the waves in my brain.”

“My father told you of our Lord who died for us, did he not? Try to think of this now, and you will forgive Slammer.”

Cedric shook his head in a troubled way. Again the light of reason seemed to be struggling with the clouds of madness.

“I can refuse you nothing,” he said. “Let Slammer live.”

The miserable captain, above whose head the sword of death had been so long suspended, now sank back in the hammock, weak and helpless as a child.

“And you, young Erle, how have you and your companions come into the madman’s lair?”

George told the story as briefly as he could.

“Ay, more of Slammer’s work!” muttered Thomas Cedric. “Slammer, why have you done this?”

“It was not my fault! It was not my fault!” groaned Slammer. “It was their cousin, Martin Erle, who did it.”

“And why?” demanded Cedric, with a look

in his eyes that made Slammer shrink and shiver.

“You’ve promised not to kill me! I can’t speak if you look at me in that way!”

Cedric turned his eyes away.

“Martin Erle wanted to get rid of these boys, that he might inherit their uncle’s fortune. I didn’t want to hurt the boys!” groaned Slammer, running his words together as was his habit in moments of agitation. “I had to do it, I assure you—I was forced to do it. Martin Erle threatened me. I told him I didn’t want to drown orphans. You may take them back to their uncle, if you know the way. He lives at Olydos.”

“Scoundrel!” exclaimed Cedric, starting, “you have spoken your last—but, no, I have promised to let you live! I will go lest I be again tempted to rid this earth of a hideous reptile. The good deeds of your father, young Erle, live after him. To-morrow I will bring you good news, boys. Prepare to leave the forest.”

Speaking the last words, Cedric seized his club, and almost immediately was lost among the trees.

When he had gone George sank on his knees, with his head resting against the wall. The boys stood around him silently and respectfully, thinking that he was offering thanks to heaven, and they joined with him in their hearts.

After a time Arthur approached. George's face had fallen on his breast, and his face was as pale as death. Nature had given way under the intense excitement of the last hour. George was in a swoon.

At first the boys imagined that he was dead, and entirely lost their presence of mind; but Luco, now that Cedric was gone, took the lead, told them what to do, and soon George opened his eyes.

"I'm glad it's over," he sighed.

"You're a hero, George," said Tom, taking his hand.

"Heroes are made of stronger stuff, I think," said George, smiling.

"If to be a hero it is necessary to go through scenes like the one that has just occurred, I'd rather not be a hero."

"You'll leave the hero business to Brian Boru, Napoleon Bonaparte, Jack the Giant Killer, and

the Seven Champions in future, I'm thinking," said Gerald.

"Gerald has read history, you notice," said Tom, quietly.

"Every man that does his duty is a hero," said Arthur.

Gerald was in the act of opening his lips to deny this, when Tom interposed.

"We have not time for idle talk," he said. "Let us look our situation in the face. We are in a dense forest—in the dwelling of a maniac. Should this maniac, in one of his paroxysms, attempt to injure us, how could we defend ourselves?"

"There is no danger of anything of that kind happening while George is with us," said Gerald.

"I think that we had better hide Slammer somewhere out of this madman's sight."

"By no manner of means! Why, Arthur, it would only enrage him. He would suspect that we put no confidence in his promise."

"We are in a terrible position. The sight of Slammer may irritate him. He may change his purpose, and, returning, wreak his vengeance on us. Oh! I wish we were out of this."

"Second the motion," said Gerald; "but I'm afraid we'll have to lay it on the table for the present."

"I have no doubt that Cedric knows the way to Para," said Tom. "The cooking utensils in the hut must have been brought from thence, and it is not probable that he carried them away in his first flight. He must have returned for them."

"There's some reason in that," said Gerald.

"His last words were, 'Prepare to leave the forest,'" said George. "Maybe he intends to show us the way to Para."

"Happy thought!" exclaimed Tom. "But you're not to talk, George. It isn't good for you just yet. Let me feel your pulse. I'm an M. D., you know."

"Mad dunce, you know," murmured Gerald.

"What?"

"Nothing. I only made a remark."

"And so," said Arthur, "we'll have to depend on a madman to lead us back to Para! The thought fills me with horror. You fellows take it very coolly."

"Half a loaf is better than none, and a cracked head follows the same rule."

"You are right, Gerald, to make the best of it."

"Of course I am. Faith, the bright side of a thing is always the pleasantest to look at."

"You've been quite brilliant lately," said Tom, wishing to return Gerald's hit about "M. D."

"You're right, my dear boy, but brilliancy doesn't run in the family, as any one may see. I've been eating fish of late, and Arthur says fish is good for the brain."

Foiled by his own weapons, Tom retreated by changing the subject.

"Well, boys, we'll leave this hut if Cedric will agree to take us."

"We have no alternative."

"Luco," said Gerald, "let's have dinner, and then we'll pack our trunks; and, having placed ourselves in the care of the magnanimous—help me out with that big word, Arthur—madman, we'll tear ourselves away from this hospitable forest. Get dinner ready, Luco; I feel tired after such a-a-cerulean" —

"Herculean?"

"Thank you, Tom—Herculean effort. Hurry up with dinner, Luco; I feel as if I could write—no, eat—a dictionary!"

“You talk as if you had eaten one—slightly damaged!” said Arthur.

Gerald pretended to consider this an excellent joke. He lay on the floor, and laughed until Arthur was very much ashamed of his attempt at wit.

Dinner was soon ready. The prospect, though dim, of reaching Para raised the spirits of the boys, and the meal was a very merry one.

“To-morrow,” said Tom, as he went to rest among the palm-leaves that night—“to-morrow may take us nearer the dear ones at home. I am sure they are praying for us. May their prayers avail, for our danger is great!”

XIX.

AN INTERLUDE OF GRIEF.

SINCE that bright morning when the boys had set off for the Swallow in Joaquim's canoe, silence and sadness had reigned in Senhor Raimundo's house at Para. When Mr. and Mrs. Desmond had returned with Mary from their pleasant visit to the rice mills, they had expected to find the boys eager to hear the events of the day, and Mary had noted all the most striking incidents in her memory in order that she might enjoy the pleasure of relating them. But no boys greeted their coming.

Joaquim was questioned. All he knew was that the three boys had set off in his canoe for the Swallow. This he told by signs and words of broken English.

It was a clear night. Mr. Desmond hired a boat and started for the Swallow. The sailors could tell him nothing, and he returned, anxious and disappointed, to Para.

Where had the boys gone? Nobody could

answer the question. Nobody could remember having seen them on the river. Some persons tried to comfort Mr. Desmond. "Oh, they'll turn up all right. Nothing ever happens to boys!" Others intimated that the boys had gone into the forest, and certainly been killed by a prowling jaguar or puma. To add to Mr. Desmond's tranquillity of mind, these kind-hearted people related many cases that had come under their notice—all tending to prove that to wander into the forest was certain death.

Days passed. Senhor Raimundo's steward came to take the Desmonds to Olydos. He sympathized with their trouble, and sent out searching parties in all directions, but with no result.

Day after day the three waited in vain. Day after day hope faded with the sun, and rose again with dawn.

Mr. Desmond seldom spoke now. His only occupation was waiting and watching for those who came not.

"Will they ever come?" moaned Mrs. Desmond, raising her tear-stained face to heaven.

“Will they ever come? Thy will be done, O Lord! But, oh! my heart is breaking.”

“They will come! I know they will!”

This was all poor Mary could say to soften her mother's grief. When she thought of bright-faced Gerald, of good, thoughtful Tom, whose bones were perhaps even then whitening under the waters of the bay, or far away in the forest, her voice broke, and she was forced to hide her fast-flowing tears from her mother, who already had more than enough sorrow to bear.

XX.

AT LAST.

A GLORIOUS morning. Fresh breezes laden with sweet scents filled the forest. The boys arose refreshed and buoyant. After morning prayers, while Luco was getting breakfast, the boys held a consultation, but before they had said anything worth repeating, footsteps sounded near, and the shadow of Thomas Cedric darkened the threshold of the hut. He entered the room and sat down on the floor, not far from the group.

“Good-morning,” he said. “Good-morning, young Erle—George is your name, isn’t it?”

“Yes, sir.”

Cedric seemed preoccupied and subdued. Luco, trembling in every limb, awkwardly arranged the frugal meal. When it was ready, George invited Cedric to partake. The invitation appeared to give him pleasure.

“Thank you, George,” he said; “you are like your father.”

The boys felt somewhat abashed in the presence of their guest.

"It's well there's no knives on the table—excuse me—on the floor!" whispered Gerald to Tom. "He can't cut himself, anyhow, and then blame it on us."

Tom's only answer to this flippant remark was a reproachful glance.

"Boys," said Cedric, "I bring you good news. To-day you will make your first steps homeward. I will lead you back to Para."

The boys were silent. It was the silence of great joy.

Tears came to Tom's eyes. His mother's gentle face rose before him.

Gerald sprang to his feet, looked for an instant at Cedric as if he were some natural curiosity, and, placing his arms akimbo, began to dance a jig.

"Erin-go-bragh," he said, gravely. "Home rule forever! You're the broth of a boy, Mr. Cedric—I beg your pardon, but you're not such an omadhaun as I took you to be. May you live till you die."

Having finished this singular expression of gratitude, Gerald sat down on the floor and

solemnly renewed his attack on the edibles, feeling that he had done the correct thing.

There was now no maniacal light in Cedric's eyes. He was watching George wistfully. George approached him and clasped his hand in silence.

"I feel as if your father were thanking me, George," he said. "Many times during last night I was tempted to return and repay Slammer in full for all his evil work; but this"—he touched the rosary which was still on his wrist—"this kept me from it. I have been there more than once. Are you ready to start?"

"Surely nobody but a born natural would ask that question," muttered Gerald.

"We are ready!" said Arthur.

"We will go at once—at once!" exclaimed George and Tom.

Luco had dimly understood the subject of their conversation. Gerald soon enlightened him, however.

"Oh! yes, we will go; we will go!" he repeated. "I will see my father!"

"And will you leave me here to starve?" cried Slammer.

“The boys can do as they please about that,” said Cedric.

“We will take you with us, of course,” said Arthur. “Don’t be alarmed, captain.”

“It’s easy to say that,” observed Gerald; “but just put yourself in his place.”

The boys concluded to carry Slammer in his hammock by turns. Slammer’s wound had not entirely healed, and the recent horror he had felt was not calculated to hasten his recovery.

Cedric, having his skin pouch filled with dried meat—prepared by a process only known to himself—led the way. George walked by his side. Gerald and Arthur followed, and then came Tom and Luco, carrying the hammock. Poor Slammer was not very heavy now, but the two found him a wearisome burden, for all that.

When night came, Cedric skillfully arranged a roosting-place for them in the lower branches of a spreading tree. Cedric spoke to no one but George, though he was very careful of his other charges.

On the second day of their journey Tom became aware that two men were following them at some distance. These unknown persons

seemed anxious to remain unobserved, as they were continually dodging from tree to tree.

Tom spoke to Arthur about it ; Arthur kept a sharp lookout.

“They are white men,” he said ; “they are Slammer’s sailors !”

And so they were, as the boys afterward discovered. When Cedric had suddenly struck down Slammer in the forest that night, the frightened sailors had fled. They had lost their way in the labyrinth-like forest, and, like the boys, had found shelter among the roots of a massaranduba. They had seen no human being in the forest until the procession of boys, headed by Cedric, had passed their refuge.

In mortal fear of the madman, they had followed at a distance, hoping they might be led to Para. Their hope was realized.

During three long and weary days the boys marched. Gerald could not restrain his impatience. Was Cedric leading them farther into the forest ? Would their journey never end ?

At last his questions were answered. Weary and faint from travel, sick from hope long deferred, almost ready to give up, the boys marched.

And one afternoon, Cedric suddenly sank upon the ground. Arthur was the first to reach him ; he tried to rise, but he could not.

“My boy,” he whispered, in a voice very gentle and tender, “the sound of the river has gone out of my head,—but I am weak,—oh, so weak. I wish that I could see a priest. They told me when I was a boy that, if I could say an act of perfect sorrow for my sins—and your father said so, too,—I might be forgiven by Our Lord”—

“You are not dying,” said Arthur, terrified by the change in the man. “Come,—you must not die,—we are lost, if you die, for we do not know the way !”

“My heart has almost stopped,” said Cedric. He paused ; his lips moved. “I have tried to be sorry for my sins. My mother used to sing a hymn, at Christmas. I wish I could hear it now !”

Cedric clutched at the vines that half-covered his breast, and murmured,—

“Mother, sing, ‘Come all ye faithful,’—the Christmas hymn, little mother.”

The other boys had drawn near him. And

Gerald, moved by the feeling of the moment, began, in his clear, sweet voice, the "Adeste Fideles."

The Christmas hymn seemed to silence the sounds in the wild place. The boys joined in it with all their hearts and voices, and, farther back, the rough voices of the sailors took up the air. The forest was filled with Christmas echoes.

As the sun went down, poor Cedric passed away; the sailors dug his grave at dusk, and buried him before midnight.

When the new sun arose, there seemed little hope. Cedric, their guide, was dead. Where was the river? Where was Para?

After a day of doubt and useless wandering, when even Gerald had almost lost his high spirits, George Erle broke out of a thicket, into which he had gone, to look for oranges, under the impression that the leaves of the trees were like those of the orange tree.

"We are near the river," he cried. "Look!"

He pointed to the little monkey, with a tiny bracelet on one of its legs, which had perched upon his shoulder.

"The little marmoset!" exclaimed George.

"I remember it,—it belonged to the girl on the big raft."

"The raft must be near," said Arthur, who for the first time noticed a slender silver chain, very long and strong, attached to the bracelet. The monkey, evidently remembering past kindness rubbed its cheek against Arthur's; it then tried to jump away, but the boy held the end of the chain. At first the capricious little creature became angry, and would not stir. A banana restored it to good humor, and our party solemnly followed it, until the river and the roofs of Paraburst upon their view. In front of them floated the great "jangoda" which had not yet started on its voyage. The little girl was waiting, under a wax palm, for the return of her pet. Arthur dropped the chain, and the monkey sprang into the water, to be embraced a few moments afterward, in spite of his dripping condition, by his dear friend.

With one impulse the five boys uttered a shout of gladness.

I cannot describe the meeting that took place in Senhor Raimundo's house when the boys, bronzed and robust, entered. Imagine yourself

returning home after a long absence, and you will know what took place. The joy of Joaquim and Luco, once more united, was not less intense than that of their white friends.

Arthur and George were not allowed to feel lonely. They soon became perfectly at home among the Desmonds.

The whole party, including Joaquim and Luco, started for Olydos. Much to their surprise and delight, the boys found that Senhor Raimundo's plantation was near that of the Erles', and so they were not separated. With bright prospects before them, the Desmonds began life in the New World. When Captain Slammer grew well enough, he set sail for the United States. On his arrival in New York he was arrested for having committed a forgery some years before. He was convicted, and he is now in prison, where he has plenty of time for repentance.

Thinking that his attempt to murder his cousins had failed, Martin Erle left Para for Mexico.

There he met his fate; all men were not so ready to forgive evil as his cousins. He tried to defraud an aged hidalgo in the town of San Buenaventura, and he was struck dead by the

knife of one of his sons. Martin Erle was not born bad,—none of us is born so. He chose evil, and persevered in it, until it seemed good. Then he died, not loving God or man.

The lesson of the experiences of our boys had been well taught. They learned to fear nothing,—for their present and future are God's,—and, loving Him, death has no terror for them. Life, the vestibule of Heaven, is pleasant to them, in sun or shadow. They know that it cannot be all sunshine, for “into each life some rain must fall.”

THREE BRAVE BOYS.

PART I.

IF you have not forgotten Jasper Thorne, you will like to hear of some adventures which befell him some years after he had been made happy by the return of his father. It happened that Mr. Thorne's interests, which were largely in Cuba and South America, took him to Para, and Jasper, who had one sad experience of separation, *would* go with him; he had determined never to lose sight of his father. Mrs. Thorne went, too. A family they knew were about to make a trip into the interior to look at a plantation, and, as it was thought best that Jasper should see something of the country,—which he could not do by staying in Para,—he was sent out with the Connells. The strangeness of forest life did not strike Jasper until the noon of the second day after he had light-heartedly said good-bye to his parents, in white-walled, red-roofed Para.

The forest was made up of great trunks wreathed by the lines of snake-like lianas.

No sound broke the stillness, except the cry of some wild animal or the distant sound of a falling bough. Although it was midday, the place was shadowed, for only the shiniest and most persevering sunbeam could squeeze through the thick foliage of the giant trees and entangled vines.

The most beautiful forms of vegetable life abounded. Huge trees draped in the folds of many-leaved parasites; bending palms with slender, quivering branches, and others with leaves large and strong enough to roof a small house; fragile ferns swaying with every breath—all these and thousands of lovelier things surrounded the traveller in the trackless wilds of the vast wilderness watered by the Amazon.

Ever and anon a brilliantly-colored bird flashed among the foliage, or a tiny monkey swung one instant by its tail, and then, showing its teeth, disappeared from sight. With a gentle ripple the igaripe, or creek, flowed between the soft green banks.

Having shown you the place, I will leave de-

scription and explanation until we get further, and now tell you what happened. It is necessary, however, to know how many travellers there were, and in what order they moved.

First—Vincente, the Indian guide, with Bernard Connell, boy of sixteen, carrying a gun.

Second—Four Indians laden with baggage.

Third—Mr. and Mrs. Connell, with Helen, a little girl.

Fourth—Jasper Thorne, now about the same age as Bernard; Rose and Alice Connell, twin sisters, about fourteen years of age.

Fifth—Joe Connell, aged thirteen, with his hands full of strange plants, his mouth full of fruit, and his hat stuffed with all the odds and ends he had gathered during the morning's journey.

Three detachments of the one party were about five yards from one another with the exception of Joe, who lingered farther behind.

They were following the course of the igaripe. Mr. Connell suddenly paused.

“Vincente,” he said, addressing the guide, “is not this the point at which Senhor Ermino’s boat is to meet us?”

“Yes, senhor.”

“We had better encamp, then.”

Vincente paused and hesitated. Vincente, by the way, was a Tapuyo, or half-civilized Indian. He wore a suit of linen and a wide palm-leaf hat.

“It is strange,” continued Mr. Connell, “that the boat has not reached this place before us.”

“It is strange,” said Vincente, shortly, probably because he spoke very little English, or perhaps he had another reason.

The other Indians threw the baggage upon the ground, and one of them whispered in his native tongue :

“Vincente has gone astray. We have lost the track.”

The others nodded. Bernard Connell had an uneasy feeling that something was wrong, though, knowing only a few words of the Tupi language, he did not understand what the Indians said.

Mrs. Connell took a box of provisions from one of the sacks the Indians carried, and began to prepare for the noonday meal, while Vincente, looking anxious and uneasy, made the fire.

The girls were eager in offering their services, but as the Indians were better cooks than they,

Mrs. Connell declined. Soon the savory odor of various preparations rose in the air.

Headed by Joe, the party of youngsters started off to procure anything else that would do for dessert. Mr. Connell threw himself on a soft couch of leaves beneath a palm, and, in a short time, Helen was listening with breathless interest to one of his stories of the fairies.

Instead of searching for fruit, the girls filled their aprons with ferns and passion flowers, while the monkeys and parrots chattered loudly in answer to their exclamations of admiration on the discovery of some plant or blossom. The boys, however, cared more for the useful than the ornamental, and in fifteen minutes they managed to secure a fair supply of bananas.

“What a beautiful country this is!” exclaimed Rose; “so different from dusty New York, with its many streets and few trees! I could live here forever.”

“The city is the safest place, though,” said Phil.

“Yes, indeed,” assented Bernard; “in spite of all the beauty around us, there are hidden dangers—snakes, jaguars, savage men”—

Rose shuddered.

“Isn’t it strange that Senhor Ermino’s boat is not here to meet us?” asked Jasper.

“I don’t care how long we wait here!” cried Rose. “It’s an earthly paradise! Alice! just look at this lovely passion-flower.”

Bernard made a sign to Jasper. The two boys stepped aside. Bernard pointed to the igaripe:

“Jasper,” he said, gravely, “what do you think of that?”

“Of what?”

“The igaripe; follow its course with your eye.”

“I think that it is an igaripe, or what we at home would probably call a creek.”

“Look closely. See! the igaripe dwindles into a mere thread of water, not sufficient to float a tub. No boat can come to us through that.”

“What can it mean? Senhor Ermino, who knows the country well, they say, wrote to your father to meet him here, and surely he would not have done so if the channel of the igaripe”—

“No,” interrupted Bernard; “the igaripe that Senhor Ermino named is full even in the dry season. The fact is that Vincente has misled us. We are at the wrong place.”

Jasper's face turned slightly pale.

"I hope that you are wrong. Lost in this vast forest! The thought is horrible!" Jasper kept his eyes on Bernard, as if hoping to see a denial of this fear.

"We can only make the best of it, trusting in God and the Blessed Virgin."

"It is too horrible!" exclaimed Jasper. "I"—

"Hush! Not so loud. We must not alarm the others."

"If you gentlemen want any dinner you had better start for the camp," cried Rose, trailing a bunch of sprays over her shoulder. "Don't I look well? I am the queen of ferns and flowers."

"More like a crazy woman," growled Joe.

"Mr. Impudence! Why, Phil, what's the matter?" she said, forgetting all about the ferns and flowers. "You are not well."

"It's nothing," said her brother; "that is"—

"It's something," asserted Rose, taking her brother's arm. "I'll not move a step until you tell me what's the matter. There's no use of Bernard and you trying to keep anything from me, I tell you that."

Rose had scarcely spoken the last word when

a wild cry broke the stillness. Another followed. It was a woman's voice. Then sounded the shrill crying voice of a child, and a confused mingling of voices.

"My mother! my mother!" cried Alice, pale and frightened. "Let us go to her." With one impulse they started toward the camp.

Again the cries rang out. "God shield them. Blessed Mother, speed us—speed us," prayed Bernard.

Through tangled ferns and vines, over withered leaves and roots they ran. Bernard and Jasper were in advance; Joe and the girls strove in vain to keep pace with them.

They had wandered farther from the encampment than they knew, and to their anxious hearts hours seemed to pass before they reached the spot.

The igaripe stole softly between its green banks, the ferns trembled, and the monkeys chattered. But a disturbing change had come over the scene. Mr. and Mrs. Connell, Helen, and the Indians were no longer there. Trunks, boxes, provisions, lay scattered around. The appearance of the ground told that a struggle had taken place.

On a thorny bush at the edge of the igaripe a rag fluttered. Bernard seized it and uttered a cry. He recognized it at once. It was a portion of Helen's frock.

Here and there spots of red, crimson and fresh, showed among the green. Jasper saw these and felt sick.

"Don't let the girls come here, Bernard," he said; "keep them back." And he thrust the blue rag into his pocket.

Weakened by the distance, a wild cry rang out.

The sound seemed to come from the igaripe, far down.

"It is my mother's voice. Will nobody save her? Can we do nothing?"

Exhausted by fatigue and emotion, Alice sank to the ground. Rose, pale and tearful, was instantly by her side, ordering Joe to bring some water from the igaripe.

Bernard and Jasper looked at each other in terrible doubt.

"Father! Mother! Ellie! where are you?"

The words burst from Bernard with a sound like a sob.

"Where are the Indians?" asked Phil.

A gasping sound answered him.

With one impulse the two boys ran to the clump of bushes from which the sound came. They found Juan, one of the Tapuyo baggage-carriers. He was speechless, apparently just recovering from a swoon.

There was a wound in his right shoulder, and a heavy box had been thrown on his chest.

Jasper removed this burden and Juan opened his eyes. Bernard brought some water, and the Indian drank eagerly.

The boys propped him up against a tree, and waited impatiently until he could speak.

"Now we shall know the worst," said Bernard, uttering a mental prayer for strength to bear it. Then he began to question the Indian in English, of which Juan had learned a little in Para.

"Where are my father and mother?"

"Gone, young senhor."

"Gone! Where?"

Juan pointed down the river.

"Igare," muttered Juan, using the Lingoa Geral.

“Speak, Juan,” said Bernard, in agony. “O Jasper! do you know what he means?”

“Igare means canoe,” said Jasper.

Juan sank back speechless.

After a time, which seemed more like an hour of anguish to Bernard, Juan again revived.

“Se cato” (I am well), he said. While Jasper attempted to stanch the blood that flowed from his wound he told his story in broken English, mixed with foreign words and phrases. Soon after the children had left the camp, Vincente had disappeared in the forest. In a few minutes Juan had heard a peculiar whistle. Another followed. It sounded like a signal. The four Indians began to suspect some unknown danger. Three of them stealthily stole away. Juan was about to warn Mrs. Connell, and to follow the others, when a shout filled the air, and the forest then seemed to swarm with savages. Juan knew that they belonged to a tribe called the Muras. Juan and Mr. Connell had stood on the defensive. Juan was wounded by a barbed club and thrown on the ground. Mr. Connell resisted gallantly, but in spite of his struggles and the screams of Mrs. Connell and Helen, the three were dragged

away and forced into a large canoe which was waiting farther down the igaripe. It had been artfully hidden amid leafy branches, and though the travellers had passed that way, it had escaped their notice.

It took Juan some time to tell this story—much more than I have taken. He was weak, and in consequence he made long pauses and frequent gaps.

When Juan had finished, Bernard grasped his rifle, which he had dropped in his excitement.

“Come, Jasper,” he said, “there is no time to lose. We must follow the wretches; come!”

“And the girls? And Juan?”

“Leave Joe and the girls to take care of Juan.”

“Nightfall, and they will be left shelterless and at the mercy of the beasts of prey.”

Bernard covered his face with his hands.

“O Jasper, this delay is terrible. Every moment takes them farther from us.”

“It can’t be helped!” said Jasper, “we must build some kind of a shelter for the girls and Juan. After that we can decide on our future course.”

“No! No!” cried Joe, who had not yet

spoken. "Let us follow the savages and attack them."

"Nonsense!" said Jasper. "Three boys and a rifle against"—

"But God will help us," answered Joe, reverently.

And Jasper remembered a time not so long ago when God had helped him, in the valley of shadows.

PART II.

"WE can only do our best," said Jasper, gravely, "and leave the rest to our God."

"And the best we can do is to follow the Indians," cried Joe.

"No. The Muras have a canoe. The word *igaripe*, as you know, means canoe-path. The Indians will glide swiftly out into the river before we have made a mile's progress through the tangled growth."

"I cannot stay here," said Bernard. "I cannot stay here in ignorance of their fate. O father! mother! dear little Ellie."

Jasper turned to the girls, who now stood pale and panting beside him. In a few words he told them all.

Juan had been following their motions with his eyes. Suddenly he spoke. "Young señors," he said, "the Muras will camp somewhere on the banks of the river before nightfall."

"That is well," said Jasper. "Keep cool, Bernard, old boy, and set to work. Let us begin at

the beginning. In the first place, we must find shelter for the girls."

"Oh! never mind us," said Rose, bravely; "I am not afraid."

"Humph! Girls never are afraid until they see a bug or a caterpillar," muttered Joe.

Boxes and packages, some broken open and a few entire, were scattered around. Jasper's eyes sparkled as he saw that the Indians had neglected to take the large piece of sail-cloth in which the stores had been wrapped. He dragged it to the tree.

"It will make an excellent tent."

"A canvas tent will be but poor shelter if a jaguar should happen to stroll this way," said Bernard.

The jaguar is a strong and fierce animal, the tiger of South America.

"Put your tent in a tree. Nobody—whether beast or man—will know where it is then," suggested Rose.

"In a tree?"

"Yes, in a tree. Look well at that one against which Juan leans. Its boughs are very strong, and pretty close together. The foliage is so

thick that if it should rain, not a drop could fall on the canvas of our tent. We would be doubly protected."

"There will be no rain for some time. The dry season is not yet over," said Bernard.

"That is a good idea, Rose; we will build your tent in a tree. Juan, lend me your knife." Jasper knelt down and took the knife from Juan's belt. He cut the canvas in two pieces.

Under Jasper's direction the boys set to work. They could all climb like monkeys. In a short time one piece of canvas was tightly fastened to two strong boughs, about four yards apart. These boughs grew straight out from the trunk of a tree. Thew were nearly in a straight line with each other; the boys held them close by binding strong lianas about them; when these were cut, they sprang away sufficiently to draw the canvas tight. This formed the floor of the tent. The trunk of the tree, which was very massive, made one side, and the other three were formed of canvas. Phil had hoped there might be enough canvas left for a roof; but he was disappointed, and the tent was roofed by the rust-

ling boughs, which were bent down and tied with lianas to the top of the canvas sides.

"It looks quite respectable," said Jasper, admiringly.

"It is a cabin fit for a king," assented Joe.

Bernard said nothing. He could think only of the lost ones. Nothing could divert his mind from them. Each cry that came from the forest made him start. Now it was his father's voice he heard, again it was little Helen's shrill tones. But all these sounds came from the forest animals.

"What do you think of your house, Rose?" asked Jasper, creeping out to the edge of a branch.

"Our house! How can it be our house when we can never enter it?" said Rose, looking up.

"Why?" demanded Jasper.

"Why?" retorted Rose, in the same tone, "don't you see, stupids, you have forgotten the stairs?"

"Julius Caesar!" exclaimed Jasper, in astonishment.

"Well, what are we to do?" asked Joe.

There was a long pause.

"I don't know," said Joe.

"I don't know," echoed Jasper.

"I'm sure I don't. Oh! what precious time we are losing," said Bernard.

"Well, I do," called out Rose. "Come, Bridget, help me pull down some of these long snaky vines."

Alice put her rosary into her pocket, and with her lips still moving in prayer, obeyed Rose.

"Now, Jasper," said Rose, "throw me down Juan's knife."

Using the knife dexterously, Rose cut off a number of pieces from the flexible, ropy stem of the vine.

"I am going to make a ladder. These shall be the steps."

The boys descended from their leafy perch. They were not long in understanding what she wanted. They all went to work with a will. At last the knotted ladder was finished.

Jasper mounted into the tree and attached it to a bough just under the opening of the tent. The other end was fastened to several stakes, firmly driven into the ground. Joe ran rapidly up and down the ladder, and pronounced it perfectly safe.

Juan, becoming tired of lying in one position, had crawled to a place where he could obtain a good view of the boy's structure. He looked at it critically, and seemed satisfied.

After some delay Rose was persuaded to ascend the ladder. Alice followed her slowly and fearfully.

"And now for Juan," said Joe.

Juan understood him.

"No, no, young senhors," he said, "I will not stay here. I go with you."

"But you are wounded, Juan!" cried the boys.

"Se cato—I am well," he responded. "But I must eat something."

"We must all eat something," said Jasper, "and make some provision for our tramp to-night."

In a box which the Muras had omitted to break open the boys found several large bags of coffee and a small package of biscuits.

Mrs. Connell's cooking utensils were scattered around the embers of the fire, and Jasper wanted to make coffee, but Bernard insisted that it would be losing time to do so. Their repast was there-

fore a hurried one, consisting of biscuits and fruit.

The food seemed to renew Juan's strength. He was somewhat weak from loss of blood, but to prove that he was well he began searching among the remnants of the stores. He found a roll of scarlet cloth, some beads, and a looking-glass. Mr. Connell was conveying them to Senhor Ermينو, at the request of the latter, and Juan now advised the boys to take these articles with them. They might possibly be useful in their intercourse with the Muras.

Much against his will, Joe was left to protect the girls, and the three—Juan, Jasper and Bernard—taking the rifle, and having secured such provisions as they could, started on their search just before nightfall.

Joe could scarcely restrain his tears as the little procession disappeared.

“We may never see them again,” sobbed Alice.

“Oh! yes, we will. Juan will take care of them,” said Rose, crying also.

Discovering that the trunk of the tree was hollow, Joe determined to make a storehouse of it, and so he dragged all the bags and boxes into

the large space, and took up his quarters for the night.

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Night ; darkness ; silence.

Joe was dreaming of mother and Helen.

“Joe ! Joe !”

Was he dreaming now ?

“Joe ! Help !” No, he was not dreaming. That was Rose’s voice.

He sprang from the hollow trunk, tightly holding Juan’s knife. He saw a large, dark animal clinging to the ladder, which the girls had forgotten to draw up.

The noise of his movements startled the beast. It turned its head and its fiery eyes glared at Joe through the dense gloom.

Joe’s heart beat loud and fast. He murmured prayer for help, and firmly grasped the knife.

The night was dark, and Joe could not make out the nature of the animal before him. It seemed long and black, with brightly gleaming eyes. Whether it was a jaguar, a puma, or a bear, he could not tell.

He stood his ground, waiting for the beast to spring.

The eyes glared upon him, and the animal made furious movements.

Rose and Alice, breathless from fright and anxiety, strained their eyes in the effort to see what was going on below them.

The animal bounded from the ladder, uttering a cry of rage. Alice shrieked and covered her face with her hands. Rose compressed her lips and crept out farther on the bough.

A large body grazed Joe's shoulder and precipitated itself into the darkness beyond him. Had the animal miscalculated the distance and overleaped him? He turned to meet his enemy when it should renew the attack.

But no attack was made. Out of the gloom came fierce growls, moans, and the sounds of conflict between two large animals.

The boy dared not approach nearer the scene of the struggle. He waited, knife in hand, ready to defend the ascent to the tree-tent.

The crashing among the branches and tall ferns was frightful. Twigs were snapped, low bushes torn up by the roots, and scattered leaves filled the air.

For a few moments the moon cast a beam

through the mass of foliage, and Joe saw a jaguar and a puma in mortal combat. It was the jaguar that had been clinging to the ladder; but, catching sight of the puma, it had overlooked its human enemy.

The mingled cries of the jaguar and the puma resounded through the forest, and awoke distant sounds from the denizens of the place. They rolled over each other, bit furiously, sprang high in the air, and fell, with a dull, heavy thud, to the earth, not fifteen yards from Joe.

“Come up here! Come, before it is too late!” cried Rose.

Joe obeyed her, ran swiftly up the ladder, and drew it up after him.

The sounds of the combat ceased. One of the animals was doubtless killed. Joe thought it must be the puma, for, though styled the “American lion,” it is no equal match for the terrible jaguar.

A low growl was heard at the foot of the tree. The puma was still alive.

Rose grasped Joe’s sleeve nervously.

“Tell me, Joe,” she asked, “can the puma climb?”

The boy had no need to answer her. They could hear the scratching of the puma's claws upon the bark. It was nearing its prey swiftly and surely.

Nearer and nearer came the puma.

"If it is God's will that we shall die," murmured Rose, "it will kill the boys."

"Don't talk of dying," returned Joe, bravely. "Have we not asked the Blessed Virgin, and will her Son refuse? Don't talk, Rose; I have the strength of five men."

The puma had stopped its progress up the trunk of the tree. The canvas door of the tent barred its advance. It pushed its head furiously against the obstruction. The tent shook.

Rose seized a long piece of strong vine and endeavored to tie the cloth more tightly to the bough.

Rip! The puma thrust its head through a weak place in the canvas floor. The sudden shock knocked Joe to one side, and the knife—their only weapon fell from his hand to the ground below.

Joe groaned, and stood as if frozen.

Quick as thought Rose made a loop of her

long piece of vine. This vine was what is called a "sipo," and was as strong as an ordinary rope.

R-r-i-p! r-r-i-p! The hole was made wider, and the ugly round head of the beast pushed entirely through the canvas. At the same moment Rose threw the loop over the puma's head.

Joe understood her plan at once. He saw that she wanted to draw the sipo tight, and thus choke the puma, which was struggling hard to get its body into the tent. The stout canvas would tear no more, however, and the puma struggled in vain.

Joe ran to Rose's assistance and grasped the end of the noose.

"Keep away, girls!" he cried, "hold tight to that big bough, for the canvas may fall at any moment."

This was very apparent; the tent quivered and rocked like the famous cradle, "on the treetop." Excitement and the sense of threatening danger gave him unusual strength and skill. He wound the ends of the noose so tightly around one of the branches which formed a side of the tent that the puma grasped and showed its glittering

teeth. Then he tied several knots in the sipo, and the invader was made fast.

Having done this, he threw down the flexible ladder and swung himself to the ground. He was going after the knife. He could guess pretty accurately where it had fallen. It lay near the foot of the tree. He groped about, but could not find it.

“Haste! haste!” cried Rose; “the puma is breaking loose.”

Desperately he renewed his search.

The girls called to him again. He could hear the puma tearing the canvas with his claws. He must have the knife.

His hand struck against something hard; it was only the root of a tree. He thrust his arm into a clump of fern and seized the lost knife. It did not take him long to run up the ladder.

The puma had succeeded in pushing one of its forelegs through the canvas. It never got any further, however, for with two blows of his knife Joe put an end to his existence. The boy could not help feeling sorry, in spite of the dangerous nature of the puma, for he had a very kind heart,

and this was the first living thing he had ever hurt.

The glowing dawn, as yet only softly tingeing the gloom of the forest, found them kneeling in thanksgiving to the beneficent Father who had protected them through the dangers of the night.

"You two are pale as ghosts!" said Joe, as he helped the girls to reach the ground long after the sun had risen. Fearing that the jaguar and puma might not yet be quite dead, they had refused to descend until it was full daylight.

"As pale as ghosts!"

"You have seen a great many ghosts, no doubt," rejoined Rose, tartly. "And indeed, it is strange that we're pale after having been frightened almost to death by wild beasts with nobody but a little boy to defend us?"

"A little boy!" repeated Joe, shocked.

"Joe, Joe," said Alice, "you know Rose is only in fun."

"Your brother has a very high opinion of himself."

"Well, Rose, you know he acted like a hero"—

"And he knows it. Boys, my dear, are the

vainest creatures in the world. We girls must teach them their place. Joe, bring the coffee-pot."

Joe grumbled, but brought that useful article. Then he made a fire. The little war of words between Rose and Joe raised the spirit of the children. The fresh morning breeze, the bright sunlight, and the wonderful forms of vegetable beauty around them made it impossible to be sad, and they soon shook off the gloom of the preceding night.

"I feel like a queen this morning," said Rose.

"And you act like one," muttered Joe, "with your airs and graces and orders."

"I wonder where Bernard, Jasper and Juan are now," sighed Alice.

"Coming here with father, mother, and Ellie, let us hope," said Joe, walking away to examine the dead puma. The puma was a large specimen of its kind. It was a cat-like animal, of a reddish yellow color, having a long tail, round head, and whiskers. It has been called the maneless lion of America. Joe admired its beauty—for its form was beautiful and graceful even in death—and turned to look for the jaguar.

Half hidden behind a slender palm Joe sees a crouching animal. It is large, powerful, tiger-like, with an orange-colored skin, spotted with black. It is the dreadful jaguar. Its fierce eyes are fixed on the girls, and they, unconscious of its presence, are busy at the fire.

All power of speech seems to have left Joe. He utters an articulate cry and raises his hand to point. This attracts Rose's attention. She sees that something is wrong. Without dropping the biscuits in her hand she takes Alice's arm and runs to the ladder. The three no sooner reach the torn tree-tent than the jaguar springs. He finds it is too late, and growls furiously, lashing his sides with his tail.

"He will climb after us," whispered Rose.

"No," says Joe, "he cannot. See one of his feet is injured. The puma punished him severely last night."

The jaguar is hideously gashed, and blood still flows from his head in various places.

"Well, he cannot follow us, that's a comfort. Here, help yourselves to these biscuits. I am glad I forgot to drop them."

Joe bit into his biscuit with a will; he is

hungry. Something touches his feet, but he does not mind it.

“We are lost,” whispered Alice, her eyes dilating and the color leaving her face.

“What”—begins Joe; but he does not finish the question. He knows what Bridget means. He sees thousands—millions—of white ants swarming up the tree. He feels their sting. Juan has told him about them. He knows that if he and the girls do not leave the tree in an hour they will never leave it alive. These termites, or white ants, will sting them to death, and tear every vestige of flesh from their bones.

And yet how can they escape? To leave the tree is to meet the jaguar, to remain is certain death.

PART III.

DEATH threatened the children on both sides. To leave the tree would be to meet the jaguar; to remain would be certain death, for the army of white ants was slowly but surely approaching them.

The body of the dead puma was already covered with the ants. In a short time nothing but the animal's bones would rest upon the ground; the termites would carry away every particle of flesh.

The jaguar lashed itself with its tail and sprang against the tree; but a few ants clung to its paws, and their sting made it howl with rage.

Rose and Alice threw their arms around each other and hid their faces.

For the first time Joe lost courage, and, white and faint, clung to one of the boughs for support. The ants had reached him; the hand which rested upon the bough was covered with them! Seeing this, Rose uttered a scream.

Alice raised her head. "Joe, Rose," said

Alice, shuddering, "if we must die, let us offer up our sufferings."

Joe could make no answer; a kind of spasm convulsed his face; his lips moved but he could not speak.

The shadow of a horrible death darkened the lives of these three children. It grew blacker—blacker.

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Bang! bang!

Was not that the sound of a rifle?

Bang! Nearer this time.

The jaguar leaped high in the air and fell lifeless to the earth.

"I say, Joe, where are you?"

Columbus did not see the dim outline of land with half the joy that Joe felt on hearing these words in Jasper's well-known voice.

Bernard and Jasper stood just beneath the tree-tent. They saw the peril of the three others at once. Bernard attempted to run up the ladder, but Jasper held him back.

Joe tried to make the girls understand that the jaguar was no longer to be feared; but they

were paralyzed with fright; they seemed incapable of action.

“Come down at once, Joe,” cried Jasper, in a clear, ringing voice. “Come down—do you hear?”

As if in a dream, Joe descended the ladder. He had scarcely touched the ground when Jasper and Bernard were in the tree-tent. Crushing hundreds of the hermites to death beneath their tread, they conveyed the girls to the edge of the igaripe.

On its waters a canoe was floating, in which a mild-looking, white-haired Indian woman sat. To the care of this woman, Juanita—she was Juan’s mother—Rose and Alice were consigned.

It was Juan who killed the jaguar and he claimed the skin. Having secured it, and left the body to be devoured by the ants, he turned his attention to Joe, who was suffering much from their stings. He made Joe follow him some distance up the igaripe to a place where the bank sloped gently. While Joe took a bath, he crushed some herbs between two stones and applied them to the tiny wounds the ants had made.

The boy felt more comfortable and greatly refreshed, and he warmly thanked Juan.

Joe and Juan were soon joined by Bernard and Jasper. The girls were not yet sufficiently composed to speak of the dangers through which they had passed, and the boys applied to Joe for information; but Joe would not gratify them until he had asked some questions.

“Have you seen them?” he asked, eagerly.

“Yes!” said Bernard, “mother and Ellie are safe.”

“Where?”

“Down in Juanita’s hut.”

“And father?”

“The Indians would not give him up.”

The bright glow on Joe’s face faded.

“You shall hear all in good time, Joe,” said Jasper. “Things are not so bad as they seem. Be patient, and relieve our curiosity.”

And so Joe told the story of that dreadful night and still more dreadful morning, as rapidly as he could. Juan showed signs of great excitement as the narrative proceeded, and when it ended Bernard and Phil breathed as if a heavy weight had been removed from their breasts.

“If there is any gratitude in us we ought to show it this day,” said Bernard.

The boys were silent for a moment, and then Jasper said :

“Our story is not so long or so thrilling as yours, Joe. ‘We went, we saw, we conquered’—that is, after we left you in your perch we tramped along the bank, hoping—rather faintly that we would come across the Indians’ camping-place.

“Tramp, tramp, tramp, over uneven, damp ground, fallen logs, through clumps of thorny bushes and heaps of rotten leaves. It was slow work, I tell you.

“‘If we only had a boat, this would be easy sailing,’ we sighed.

“This gave Juan an idea. It was as dark as pitch ; we had to grope our way with our hands extended before us.

“In pushing through a clump of trees an odoriferous scent surrounded us. Juan tore a piece of bark from one of the trees.

“‘Young senhors,’ he said, excitedly, ‘this bark is cravo de Marahae (cloves of Maranham).’

“‘Is it?’ I asked, not knowing that anything was to come of this discovery.

“‘My mother gathers it every year,’ Juan continued. ‘The “cravo tree” grows only in two places on this igaripe, and at one of them my mother has a little house. If this is the place, you shall have a canoe, young senhors.’

“We followed Juan, our hearts beating with hope.

“After awhile a tiny spark of light shone through the darkness.

“Juan ran ahead. In a quarter of an hour we found ourselves in a small, four-posted hut, thatched with palm-leaves.

“Juanita was delighted to see her son. She received us very kindly, and offered to lend us her canoe. We lost no time; Juan took the paddles, and we were soon gliding over the smooth water.

“This was different work from that weary walking. Our only fear was that the Indians had not encamped anywhere on the banks. But we needn’t have troubled ourselves about that. Juan’s sharp eyes spied their encampment.

“Juan left us in the canoe and went to reconnoitre. He came back soon to tell us that he

had spoken with the Tushaira, or chief of these Indians, and that they were not Muras, as he had supposed, but of an unknown tribe. The Tushaira was willing to exchange his prisoners for anything valuable.

“We all went ashore. The Tushaira was standing in front of a rude hut conversing with several Indians. The red light from a large fire danced among the gay feathers and ornaments of his dress.

“Juan and Bernard advanced to open negotiations, while I, holding the scarlet cloth, the beads, and the looking-glass, remained in the shade.

“Well, after a great deal of talk the Tushaira consented to let us have your mother and Ellie. Your father, he said, was worth more than the things we brought. We had no choice but to agree.

“And now we must find some way of saving your father from the savages.”

When Jasper had finished his recital the boys strolled back to the canoe, leaving Juan busy about some arrangement of his own. Juan had taken a fancy to fish, and he determined to

secure some of the finny tribe that swarmed in the igaripe.

He searched closely among the trees until he found a plant called "timbo." He pulled the roots of this plant out of the ground, and carrying it with him, joined the boys.

"Juan," said Juanita in the Indian language—"Juan, my son, these poor children have nothing to eat. There is some farina in the canoe, but we have no dried fish, no meat, nothing."

"Be tranquil, mother," he answered. "Young senhors," he continued, "I am going a-fishing."

"A good idea, Juan," said Jasper, "but impossible to carry out just now. You have no line."

"No hook," said Juan.

"Young senhors, you shall have fish. I have spoken."

The boys, and even Rose, laughed at Juan's gravity.

Juan crushed the timbo roots between two hard stones until they were reduced to fibres; he then mixed them with damp clay in one of the packing-boxes. These proceedings excited the

curiosity of the boys to the highest pitch. Juan showed his teeth and refused to answer their questions.

“You shall see,” was all he said.

With Bernard’s assistance he carried the box a short distance up the stream to a place where a narrow tongue of land jutted out into the igaripe. Gradually and slowly the contents of the box—clay saturated with timbo-juice were tilted into the water.

“Young senhors,” said Juan, “run and look for a basket or a box. Get one for each, if you can.”

The boys obeyed. Bernard secured a small basket, Phil a large box, and Joe a tin pan.

They returned to Juan armed with these utensils and saw that the timbo had produced great commotion among the fish. Small fishes were springing from the water, twisting and turning and even floating helpless on their backs. Juan had waded into the water up to his knees; he was engaged in “scooping in” the victims of the timbo. The boys, with their box, pan and basket, went to work in the same way. In a quarter of an hour they had caught more fish

than they could eat in a week. The larger fishes were not so quickly affected by the suffocating influence of the timbo poison. Nevertheless the boys secured several.

Juanita soon turned the fish into a very savory dish with the aid of her farina and a fire. Salt was always carefully kept by these Indians. Farina, by the way, which is a staple article of food among the people of South America, is made from the root of the mandioca plant. It looks like sawdust, but is very nutritious. The mandioca plant also gives us tapioca.

The children enjoyed their dinner. Juanita was so kind and motherly, Juan did such funny things, and they were all so glad that mother and Ellie were safe. It really seemed as if peace and joy were coming to them again. In a day or two at most they hoped to be all united—father, mother, and children.

After dinner the boys gathered up all the articles that the Indians had not taken and placed them in the canoe. Then, to the sound of the moving paddles as they softly rippled in the water our boys and girls glided away from the spot where they had suffered so terribly.

The meeting between the children and their mother when they reached Juanita's hut need not be described. Imagine yourself in their place and you will understand what took place a thousand times better than I can tell you of it.

The girls determined to remain with Mrs. Connell and Juanita while Juan and the boys went to the Indians' camp in order to negotiate for the release of the father.

What article of value could they give the Indians in exchange for the prisoner? Rose and Alice answered by removing their earrings.

"This is the first time that earrings ever answered any useful purpose."

"This is not the first time you have said a foolish thing," answered Rose with dignity.

Joe produced a cherished penknife. Bernard and Phil contributed two or three small articles the Indians had refused before. Mrs. Connell could only give her prayers, which after all were of more value than anything else.

They started. The canoe sped quickly through the waters of the igaripe.

Juanita's hut is out of sight. The boys can no longer see the little group in front of it.

“Senhor Bernard,” Juan whispered, drawing a palm-leaf from his pouch, “I forgot to give you this. The white prisoner among the Indians gave it to me last night.”

“My dear boys: Make your way down the igaripe as soon as you can. These Indians are cannibals. They are afraid of your rifle. That alone made them surrender your mother and Ellie; but they will find some way of getting it from you. I will not see you again until we meet in heaven. May your patron saints watch over you! To-morrow” —

There was no more.

“O Juan! Juan!” groaned Bernard, “why did you not give me this sooner?”

“I forgot, senhor.”

Jasper’s eyes filled with tears as he read the words. “And he even thought of me at such a time! Oh! we must save him.”

“What does to-morrow mean?” asked Joe. Phil and Bernard exchanged meaning glances. They thought of the words, “These Indians are cannibals.”

If the canoe sped through the water before, it flew now. The paddles tossed showers of spray

right and left. The trees on the banks seemed to be rushing past the boys with frightful rapidity.

As they came in sight of the Indians' camp they noticed that the bank was crowded. The Indians were gathered around a huge fire.

Suddenly a man sprang from among them and plunged into the water. A loud yell filled the air, and two or three Indians followed him.

"It is father! it is father!" cried Joe.

Joe was right. Mr. Connell headed directly for the canoe. The Indians, who were better swimmers, gained on him.

"Take the paddle, Joe!" cried Bernard, throwing off his coat. "Hold the rifle ready, Jasper." And he sprang out to meet his father. The Indians dared not come near the dreaded rifle; they slackened their exertions, and after a short pause, swam back to the shore.

Bernard reached his father just in time to save him from sinking. His strength was exhausted, and when Juan and Bernard helped him into the boat he was insensible.

The boys turned the canoe, and paddled up the igaripe. The Indians were afraid to follow,

for Jasper rested the rifle on the stern of the canoe.

As soon as Mr. Connell revived he told them the Indians were in the act of leading him from prison when the canoe came in sight. It was a great Indian feast-day, and they had determined that he should be part of their feast; and so they built that huge fire for him.

The sight of the approaching canoe gave him hope. He resolved to make one desperate effort. He was not bound, though guarded by three Indians. When he had reached the bank of the igaripe, and the attention of his guards was fixed on the approaching boat, he leaped into the water. With what result, you know.

Again the family were united. Juanita's hut was made, in their eyes, dearer than any place could ever be. Love, joy, and happiness were theirs, and Jasper thanked God with them.

Juanita knew the forest well. Piloted by her, they reached Senhor Ermino's plantation in safety.

Mr. Connell, who had despaired of ever making terms with Senhor Ermino for his plantation,

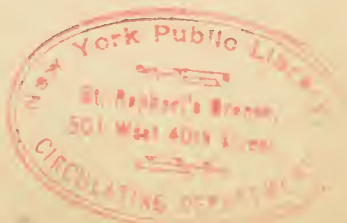
found him unexpectedly tractable, when he heard the story of these adventures.

"I was afraid to sell you my place, *senhor*," he said, "because I thought that you were what they call, in the Wild West of your country, a 'tenderfoot.' But, with such boys as you have, I think you can take very good care of it. I wish," the old gentleman added, putting his hand on Jasper's shoulder, "that I had a boy like this."

Jasper blushed and thanked *Senhor Ermino*.

"If I had not the best father in the world," he said, "I am sure I should choose you, *senhor*!"

Senhor Ermino smiled and sighed. Jasper, after a week's visit, went back to Para with *Senhor Ermino*. He had much to tell; his mother shuddered when she heard of the cannibals; but *Senhor Ermino*, who loves everything in Brazil, declares that the Indians merely meant to frighten Mr. Connell!



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